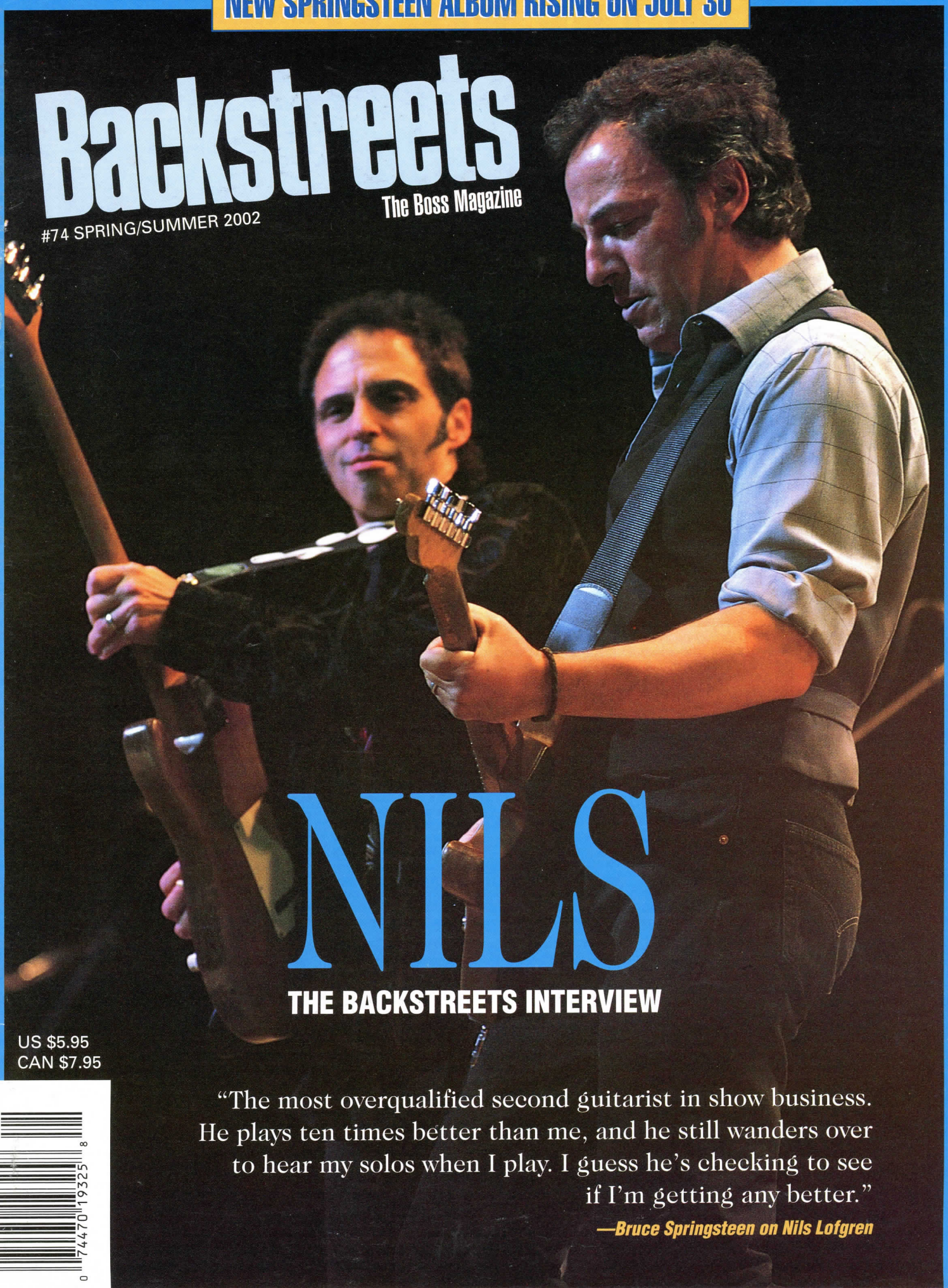
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#74 SPRING/SUMMER 2002



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Backstreets

THE BOSS MAGAZINE SINCE 1980

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countin' on a miracle!

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BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & NILS LOFGREN
4/17/00 Austin, TX
P. Jay Plutzer Photo/www.prisonerofrockandroll.com

OFF THE WALL

NILS LOFGREN
5/17/02 New York, NY
Debra L. Rothenberg Photo

LETTERS

MONKEY BUSINESS

Dear Editor:

Recently my six- and four-year-old daughters came home after being out with mom. Apparently they had been listening to the cassette copy of *18 Tracks* we keep in the car—their current favorites include "Janey" and "Sad Eyes"! It is quite something to hear your four-year-old singing these songs to herself while she plays. Anyway, my six-year-old daughter comes in the house singing "Part Man, Part Monkey," and she came running over to excitedly tell me that she really liked the song. I said, "That's great, I really like that song, too." She then turned dead serious and asked something like, "Um, Daddy um... which part, um, of his body do you think is the, um, man and which part do you think, um, is the monkey? I think the monkey part are his legs! And his face is the man part!"

I thought that was quite adorable, and after starting to think about how to explain what the song is really about, I told her I would explain it when she gets older—and that I thought she was right, his legs were the monkey part.

Let's hope she doesn't listen to "Pony Boy" next!

Tom Weiss
via e-mail

HE'S THE REAL THING

Dear Editor:

Have you heard the news? There's good rockin' tonight! Bruce is recording with Brendan O'Brien! When I first heard that news, I couldn't believe it. I think it's the best news I've heard since the reunion of the E Street Band, for two reasons: First, Bruce is "seriously" recording new material—in a professional studio, with a producer, not home rehearsals or self-made demos. And second, he is recording with someone different for the first time in many years, and it's not Quincy Jones, Tricky or Phil Collins, it's Brendan O'Brien! This man rocks! A man who has recorded with rock bands like Pearl Jam, Neil Young, Rage Again the Machine, and Stone Temple Pilots. Welcome back to rock 'n' roll, welcome back to guitars, welcome back to the man and the band, and welcome back to the road (as Bruce himself has been saying, the record will be followed by a new tour with the E Street Band). I think that Brendan O'Brien can bring some new energy and power to Bruce's music, but maintaining that classic rock sound, like he did with Neil Young's *Mirror Ball*, or like Rick Rubin has done with Tom Petty or Johnny Cash. I think it could be a great choice.

I just can't wait to hear studio versions of the songs premiered during the last tour and, of course, the newest songs that we still [haven't heard at all]. I think we have some good reasons to believe in the future record, some good reasons to have faith. I just can't wait to have the new single in my hands. It's gonna be a long time until then.

Telm Planas
Vilafranca del Penedès,
Spain

REAL "WORLD"

Dear Editor:

After listening to three of the Holiday shows (12/3, 12/6, and 12/8), I was inspired to get a hold of Garland Jeffreys' album *Don't Call Me Buckwheat* and compare the studio version of "Welcome to the World." To my surprise, the song that everyone is listing as such is actually two separate songs. The first song is "Moonshine in the Cornfield." This song is a prelude to "Welcome to the World" and is actually listed as a separate song on the CD. Thought you might appreciate the info. Also, the CD is well worth listening to, infused with social messages.

Rob Oslan
via email

DEDICATION

Dear Editor:

First off, the new issue is great. I'm writing to point out one possible correction, though—in the well-written article on the 2001 holiday shows, Lisa Iannucci wrote of Steve Van Zandt, "His absence was never explicitly mentioned onstage." If she is saying that they never explained the specific reasons why he wasn't there, I think that's correct. But if she is saying that he was never mentioned, that's incorrect. I know that at the 12/7 show that I attended, prior to busting into "It's Been a Long Time" with Southside, Bruce stated, "This one goes out to Stevie. We miss ya." Southside added, "And we love ya," which Bruce then repeated. Just wanted to point that out.

Howie Weisel
via email

WITH EVERY WISH...

Dear Editor:

I have enjoyed your magazine for many years, but your Winter 2001/2002 issue *[Backstreets #74]* was fairly disappointing. I remember purchasing a magazine about Bruce Springsteen, *not* one about the Stone Pony, Southside Johnny, Asbury Park and New Jersey (thank God there was no reference to Joe Grushecky). Granted, this is largely the fault of the man himself—he simply has not given you much material with which to work lately. Still, your previous issue with the retrospective on the Veterans Benefit shows was excellent, and an example of how to remain relevant and interesting during the all-too-frequent periods of dormancy in Springsteen's career.

Frankly, devoting the bulk of an issue to the charity and holiday shows was a stretch. They are certainly noble endeavors and Springsteen deserves nothing but praise for them. I always enjoy reading about Bruce's acts of charity and his generous, socially conscious spirit. However, musically they hold limited interest for me, and, I suspect, for many fans throughout the world. As hard as it is to believe, there do exist fans outside of New Jersey for whom Asbury Park has little meaning. The politics and struggles of a worn-down Jersey shore town and its local nightclub, however historically relevant to Springsteen, are no different from those of many communities through the country and the world. One could argue that this is where Springsteen's focus lies these days, and that it is therefore worthy of coverage. Perhaps, but there are other topics, like a full-length

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DVD review, that would also be appropriate for a music magazine. When the problems of my own community are addressed, I'll devote some interest to those of Asbury Park. Until then, I'd just like to read some more about Bruce Springsteen and his music. Here's hoping that the next year yields volumes of musical material for your magazine!

Joshua Stevens
Oklahoma City, OK

DELIVERY SERVICE

Dear Editor:

I was so blown away by Chris Nelson's article "How to Make It Talk" in the recent issue ["Deliver Me From Nowhere," *Backstreets* #73] that I had to write and thank you for it. I'm shocked (and thrilled) that after being a fan all these years, I could look at these songs that I know inside and out, and actually get a different view on them. It feels like a rediscovery of the music! I can't stop listening to different songs, trying to find the vibe.

Who hasn't listened to *Born to Run* a million times while driving? But I recommend that everyone read the article, jump in their car, stop at a red light with the CD set on "Born to Run," and let it rip!

Jenni Mansi
via email

BURNING LOVE

Dear Editor:

I am extremely glad to see Flynn McLean doing a section on CD-R releases. He knows that stuff better than anyone, and in the last two years, the CD-R releases have meant more to me than any release by any silver-CD label anywhere in the world.

Tony Kuzminski
Chicago, IL

CORRECTIONS:

•The 7/26/84 Toronto concert captured on *Part of the Show* took place at the CNE Grandstand, not CNE Stadium; the first true stadium show of the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour was Syracuse, 1/26/85. ["On Collecting," #73]

•Melissa Etheridge performed "Born to Run," not "Thunder Road," at the October 20, 2001, Concert for New York City. ["Fringe Benefits," #73]

A REAL MAN'S VIEW

Dear Editor:

You are probably receiving a lot from loyal readers due to the "Lucky Touch" poll. *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* are often looked upon as the two great errors of Bruce Springsteen's career. I, however, see them in a totally different light.

These two albums represent a different theme in Bruce's [ongoing] narrative. Throughout *Darkness on the Edge of Town* and *The River* we hear stories about everyday characters—these songs are about someone who may be down but is not out. They are about someone whose own doubts and losses are keeping them grounded. But they want something more, and even if their "pretty little dreams are torn," they are still holding on. They are longing for something to fill the void that they are feeling in their lives.

In *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, all of this longing and all of this dreaming—being "on that hill" for what seemed to be an everlasting amount of time—finally paid off. These albums are tinged with optimism. They are about second chances, about finding love and redemption all over again, and knowing that believing "in the faith that can save me" wasn't in vain. The characters in *HT/LT* have overcome their own doubts and losses that they have been feeling since those days they were riding in stolen cars and downbound trains.

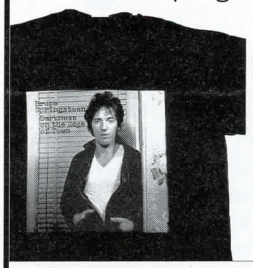
In "The Long Goodbye" he says, "Climbin' a wall a hundred miles high/Well I woke up this morning on the other side." Then later in the song, "Starin' at the last link in the chain"—the chain of his own lies that he makes reference to earlier—"Well let's raise our glass and let the hammer fly." That is what those albums mean to me. They are about winning the internal conflict and grasping some kind of victory in the "Real World."

"Badlands" lets me know that I have to fight to overcome whatever is thrown my way. "Living Proof" and "Better Days" give me the belief that one day it will all be worth it. After all, I'm just another tramp "searching for my beautiful reward."

David Masciotra
via email

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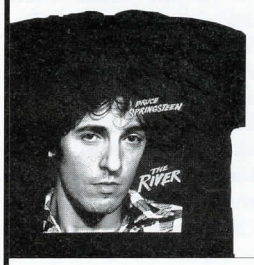
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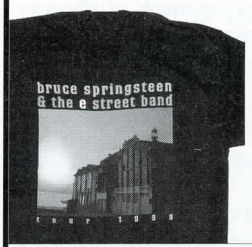
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BACKSTREET RECORDS

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Walkin' these streets so long...

If Dreams Came True

By Christopher Phillips

June 3, 2002

True story. Last night I dreamed that Bruce had finished his new record, and he wanted me to hear it. We were in a small room with a couch—it makes me think of the cover of *Tracks*—and a towering stereo in the corner. He played me three songs, but all I remember is the one of which he was most proud: a cover of "Rhinestone Cowboy."

Okay, the wrong song stuck with me. But the other thing that lingered was a feeling I've sorely missed—the thrill of hearing new Springsteen songs. Then, just a few hours after waking up, the official word came today that a new album is set for release on July 30, less than two months away. Sometimes dreams do come true. Well, not the Bruce-sings-Glen Campbell part, at least not yet. But after months of rumor and innuendo, misinformation and denials (you mean Bruce and the E Street Band *really were* recording in Atlanta after all?!), as of today we have a complete, official track listing for Springsteen's first rock record in over ten years. We have confirmation that *The Rising* is an E Street Band record, the first since 1984. And according to the press release it was produced—not co-produced, but *produced*—by Brendan O'Brien.

If it weren't for that last fact, we might not be getting an album this summer at all. In an Associated Press story today, Bruce "credited his collaborator with speeding the recording process." That in itself is enough to thank our lucky stars for O'Brien. But what he might have brought to the process of actually making the record, aside from speed, holds great promise for *The Rising*.

For the the latter half of Springsteen's career, the sonic circle behind his recordings—responsible for producing, recording, and engineering—has been a closed one. Largely, it's been some combination of Springsteen, Jon Landau, Chuck Plotkin, and Toby Scott. It's easy to forget that that hasn't always been the case. Mike Appel, Jim Cretecos, and Louis Lahav were responsible for the first two albums. In 1975, the arrival of Landau in the studio had much to do with the sound of *Born to Run*. Jimmy Iovine was on board for *Born to Run* and *Darkness on the Edge of Town*; for the latter, Plotkin was new to the team. Neil Dorfsman recorded *The River*, which Scott mixed with Plotkin. Little Steven was also upgraded to co-producer and continued in that role on *Born in the U.S.A.* After the final addition of Plotkin to the production team on *Born in the U.S.A.*, they circled the wagons. Decades later, fresh ears may go a long way toward rejuvenating the Springsteen sound.

As quite a few readers pointed out in our recent *Lucky Touch* poll (the results of which start on page 18), production was a big factor in the finished product of *Human Touch* ("too slick") and *Lucky Town* ("too rough") not quite meeting the potential of the songwriting. A song like "Real World" is a perfect example—so much of the awesome power of its live debut, the stripped-down solo-piano version played at the 1990 Christic Institute benefits, was lost among the bells, synths, and spritely pace in the studio. Similar cases could be made for songs like "Soul Driver" and "57 Channels."

Once an artist writes the words and even the music, a song can still go in countless directions in the studio—witness Springsteen's struggle with "Blood Brothers" in the 1995 documentary. A strong producer can not only help guide and speed the process of developing arrangements, but also keep an eye on the bigger picture in focusing themes and selecting songs. Some of our *Lucky Touch* poll-takers clamored to replace *Human Touch* songs with same-era songs from *Tracks*—and they also wondered why someone else didn't do so back in '92.

Think about the importance of songs like "Murder Incorporated" and "My Love Will Not Let You Down" on the last tour—songs that were left off of *Born in the U.S.A.* An outside producer might have rescued recordings we had to wait for *Greatest Hits* or *Tracks* to hear.

In a lot of ways, it's simply a matter of objectivity vs. subjectivity, which is an issue certainly not confined to Springsteen's recordings. Bob Mould and Paul Westerberg, two artists I greatly admire, released albums this year that were self-produced and, ultimately, disappointing. Many fans have felt that Springsteen and his longtime collaborators might be too close to the art to judge it, to capture it most effectively in the studio, to make the decisions that result in the best record possible. Or, in fact, too familiar with each other to shake things up. An outside producer would have the distance to push Springsteen's art in new directions, avoid old habits, and see new possibilities.

While Bob Dylan may have had mixed feelings about Daniel Lanois' production after the fact, it's hard to deny that Lanois was a catalyst for two of Dylan's best albums of the last 15 years: *Oh Mercy* (including its two sensational outtakes, "Series of Dreams" and "Dignity," both released later) and *Time Out of Mind*. Brendan O'Brien helped Dylan on *MTV Unplugged* and finished the recording of "Dignity" for *Greatest Hits 3*. O'Brien an engineer, producer, and musician, which would seem to make him a perfect collaborator.

Springsteen welcoming a new producer in the studio also seems to be a logical and overdue extension of his urge to work with new musicians after *Tunnel of Love*. Studio recording is an art in itself—the art of capturing sound and putting it on record—and for better or for worse, a producer has everything to do with how we hear a piece of recorded music. For a round-up of some greats throughout the history of recorded music, put your hands on *MOJO* magazine's May 2001 issue (#90). *MOJO*'s list of "100 Sonic Visionaries" is fascinating reading. You'll find Thom Panunzio on that list, with his "Finest Moment" credited as *Born to Run* (an album on which Panunzio was one of six assistants listed—that's in *addition* to Iovine, mixing and engineering; and Springsteen, Landau and Mike Appel, producing.) The *MOJO* list also includes names like Phil Spector, Mitch Easter, John Cale, Dave Fridmann, Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois, George Martin, the Bomb Squad, Steve Albini... whose unique influences are the reasons why I love so many of the records I love.

For that matter, Springsteen and his regular studio cohorts, too, are responsible for some of my all-time favorite recordings. Shaking things up in the studio might not necessarily bring good results. Change could turn out to be a bad thing. But I wouldn't bet on it, especially judging by Bruce's own excitement about the new record. In any event, he should be applauded for being willing to try new things at this point in his career, to say nothing of taking his own advice: as Springsteen often said on the last tour, "You can't get there by yourself."

As much Springsteen music as I've been playing lately—between deciding on my own *Lucky Touch* picks and getting psyched for *The Rising*—I've also been listening to Brendan O'Brien productions. It's the latter that has me most excited. Try this: put in Pearl Jam's *Vs.*, cue it up to track 11 ("Leash") at the 2:35 mark. If you squint, you can imagine it as a lead from the new Springsteen record: dig the full yet crisp sound, the separation, the up-front drums.... At this point, it's the closest I can get to imagining what O'Brien producing the E Street Band might sound like. A couple months further on up the road, and we'll know what the payoff is for all this anticipation. But if there's anyone who stands a good chance of capturing the glory we heard from the stage in 2000 on a record, O'Brien is a damn good bet.

Oh, and in that dream I had, Bruce showed me his new music video too. I kid you not. And if, over the next few months, we wind up seeing Springsteen in a sparkling, black cowboy get-up (these were rhinestones, but I'll take sequins or anything close), I'm starting my own Psychic Friends Network.

No more waitin'

New Album Rising

"If you have all of our other records, you don't have this one. We picked up the level of intensity. I can't wait for people to hear this record." That man-on-a-mission quote comes from Bruce Springsteen himself, discussing his forthcoming album, *The Rising*. Fortunately, when it comes to people hearing the record, he doesn't have to wait long: *The Rising* will be released on July 30.

Springsteen's publicist, Shore Fire Media, made the official announcement on June 3, confirming that the album was recorded in 2002 at Southern Tracks Studio in Atlanta. The involvement of the E Street Band makes *The Rising* his first new batch of songs recorded with them since 1984.

In an Associated Press article, Springsteen compared the *Rising* sessions to those for *Born to Run*, as Larry McShane reported, "with the band playing live in the studio for the basic track and other parts added later."

"The sound is very recognizable and very different," Springsteen said. Part of the difference in sound is accounted for by producer Brendan O'Brien, who Bruce also credited with shortening the time it took to make an album. He joked, "I woke up one morning, and I had a record."

Two of the *Rising* compositions, "Further On (Up the Road)" and "My City of Ruins," have already debuted live, though the latter gets the E Street treatment here for the first time. The 13 remaining songs, as Bruce told McShane, were all written after September 11 and are colored by the events of that day.

"The songs I wrote sort of occur in that context," Springsteen said. "It's more of an emotional feeling that I felt—and that I felt was in the air at that time.... [Some songs] deal more directly with it than others, but the stories all happen in a post-Sept. 11 context. If you were writing at that point, it's in everything in some fashion."

15 NEW SONGS ON THE RISE

1. **Lonesome Day**
2. **Into the Fire**
3. **Waitin' on a Sunny Day**
4. **Nothing Man**
5. **Countin' on a Miracle**
6. **Empty Sky**
7. **Worlds Apart**
8. **Let's Be Friends**
9. **Further On (Up the Road)**
10. **The Fuse**
11. **Mary's Place**
12. **You're Missing**
13. **The Rising**
14. **Paradise**
15. **My City of Ruins**

Following a reportedly intensive writing period last December, Springsteen was working with O'Brien in Atlanta by January, where clandestine recording continued throughout the spring. But not only in Atlanta: Brad Schmitt reported in the *Tennessean* that Springsteen came to town on March 13, flying in with O'Brien in the producer's Cessna. According to Schmitt, "The two came here because they wanted to record some string sound from the noted Nashville String Machine, which has played on hundreds of notable recordings. Session work was done at the Sound Kitchen in Cool Springs. The studio's general manager, Jennifer Rose, had been courting Brendan to do work there for many months."

With E Street Band members flying to Atlanta on a regular basis, and reportedly pulling all-nighters in the studio into early May, the album took shape quickly. The first glimpse came at a May 14 Sony conference in New York, where Columbia/Epic previewed their upcoming releases for retailers in New York. Springsteen managers Jon Landau and Barbara Carr played five recordings in the Sony Wonder High Definition Theater ("Mary's Place," "Nothing Man," "The Rising," "Lonesome Day," and "Into the Fire"), and Landau also talked a bit about the new album.

One attendant told *Backstreets*, "Landau spoke for about 8-10 minutes. He told us it was his birthday, and he thought it was important to be there anyway. He described the creation and evolution of the album, saying that [Columbia Records Chairman] Don Ienner had suggested Bruce work with O'Brien five years ago when Jon had asked for ideas. He said 'fast-forward 4-1/2 years—because we're talking about Bruce timelines here...' and Bruce finally met with Brendan. Landau described how the record was created differently than any other Bruce record, in that it was 'recorded in a span of three months.' Landau joked that that was the point where Bruce would normally shelve a record and keep going, but not so with this one. He said Bruce is 100% behind getting this record heard by as many people as possible, and will do whatever it takes to do so."

Two weeks later, on May 30, Springsteen and Patti Scialfa were on hand as the entire record was played for another small Columbia function. Springsteen spoke afterwards, expressing the special and personal nature of the record. He also made sure to collect all the numbered lyric sheets at the end of the event. (The "secret" sessions may be over, but they're still not going to make it *that* easy.)

While there was no mention of a tour on the June 3 press release, talk of big promotional activity includes E Street Band shows likely to happen soon after the record hits. At the time of the record announcement, *Pollstar* reported that "there are now indications that promoters may have some fall dates on hold."

—*Christopher Phillips*

At press time, sources indicate that a full-scale E Street Band tour should be underway by fall, with several months of U.S. dates likely. An overseas jaunt is being planned as well, with touring to continue into 2003. There may be confirmation by the time you read this—check www.backstreets.com to keep up with any such news as it breaks.

the backstreets jukebox

1. Bruce Springsteen
Human Touch / Lucky Town
Columbia (CDs)

2. Elvis Costello
When I Was Cruel
Island (CD)

3. Norah Jones
Come Away With Me
Blue Note (Columbia)

4. Tom Waits
Alice / Blood Money
Anti/Epitaph (CDs)

5. Ed Harcourt
Here Be Monsters
Capitol (CD)

6. DJ Shadow & Cut Chemist
Product Placement
One29 Recordings (CD)

7. Pete Droge
Spacey & Shakin'
57/Epic (CD)

8. Ken Stringfellow
Touched
Manifesto (CD)

9. R.E.M.
r.e.m.IX
www.remhq.com (download)

10. Flatlanders
Now Again
New West (CD)

10 Monster Discs to Play Today and Everyday

PERFORMANCE

Two Nights to Rock, at the Stone Pony

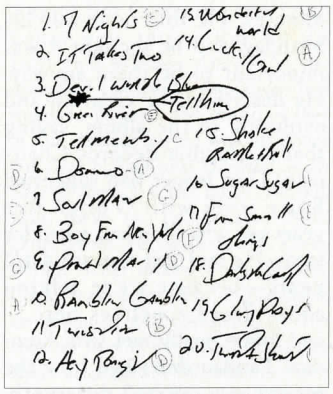
Rumson Country PTA

How's this for a PTA event: a three-hour show at the Stone Pony, where Bruce Springsteen plays a bevy of '60s-era covers and a handful of his own songs at the end of the night. For parents and teachers of Rumson Country Day School students, that scenario was actually a reality over two nights in mid-April.

In 1999, Bruce donated a guitar to a RCDS auction, along with a 30-minute lesson (the package went for $27,000). This year, at a black-tie fundraiser for RCDS in February, Springsteen (in involved-parent mode) announced that his next contribution would be a fundraiser of his own. The event raised even more money for the school and was enjoyed by more people as well. Given the opportunity by Springsteen to plunk down $1000 per couple, many RCDS parents jumped at the chance. In return, non-transferable tickets were sent out by mail, and two months later donors got a private concert at the Stone Pony.

Bruce played two invite-only shows to accomodate parents and teachers—for the lower school on April 13, and the upper school on the 14th. RCDS teachers were admitted for free. For the vast majority of Springsteen fans—those with no school ties—the sidewalk outside the Pony was the closest you could get.

Springsteen reportedly offered at his original announcement to take requests, resulting in a show packed with live rarities. He covered the likes of Van Morrison ("Domino,") Sam & Dave ("Soul Man"), the Beatles ("Tell Me Why"), Sam Cooke ("Wonderful World," "Twistin' the Night Away"), Smokey Robinson ("You've Really Got a Hold on Me"), a pair of Bob Seger tunes ("Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," "Get Out of Denver"), and three by CCR ("Green River," "Hey Tonight," "Proud Mary"). Add to that "Seven Nights to Rock" (Moon Mullican by way of Nick Lowe), "Tell Him" (the Exciters) "It's All Over Now" (Bobby Womack/Rolling Stones), "Ain't Too Proud to Beg" (Temptations) and more. It was as if Springsteen was getting every cover out of his system that he didn't play on the 1999-2000 tour.



Handwritten setlist from 4/13/02.

One fan on the inside told *Backstreets* that "Seven Nights to Rock" was "one of the best songs of both nights." The Seger covers were reported highlights as well.

The set also included three Springsteen compositions, played both nights at the end of the show: "Glory Days," "Thunder Road," and, most surprisingly, "Darlington County."

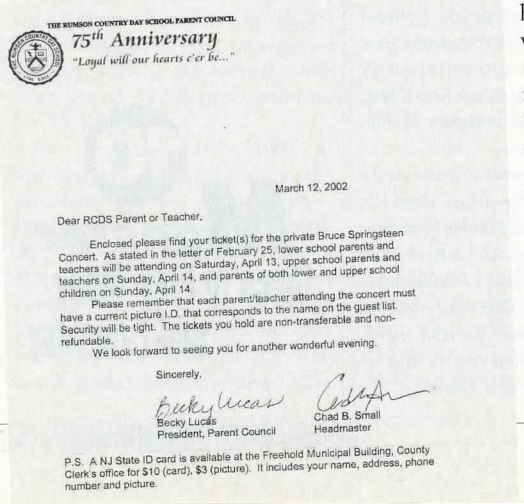
While many fans have wondered post-9/11 if Springsteen would ever play the song again, "Darlington County" was performed at the Pony with the original "Our pas each own one of the World Trade Centers" line intact. Patti Scialfa performed her own "Lucky Girl" at the first show. "Thunder Road," a duet between Bruce and Patti, accompanied only by Bruce's guitar, ended the set both nights.

Bruce and Patti had some help from their friends: Soozie Tyrell, Lisa Lowell, Bobby Bandiera, Southside Johnny, and, on April 14, Max Weinberg. After receiving a "Happy Birthday" serenade, Max drummed from "Domino" through "Darlington County." Bandiera provided the house band, starting off the show with songs like "Mustang Sally" and "American Girl." The line-up included Bob Berger on guitar, Steve "Muddy" Shews on bass, Joey Stann on saxophone, Mike Mancini on keyboards, and Joe Bellia on drums.

On the setlist but not played were "Shake Rattle & Roll," the Archies' "Sugar Sugar," and "From Small Things" (4/13); "A Hard Day's Night," Marvin Gaye's "Hitch Hike," and Sam Cooke's "Good Times" (4/14). Springsteen also asked the band to learn "When a Man Loves a Woman" (Percy Sledge), "634-5789" (Wilson Pickett), "Come See About Me" (the Supremes), "Cry to Me" (Solomon Burke) and "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love" (Solomon Burke/Blues Brothers).

Backstreets subscriber Rena Thompson writes, "I was there, listening [from outside]... A joy to hear Bruce sing all these songs I would have never heard otherwise. He sounded great, his voice as wonderful as ever. I had my ear to the door when he sang "Thunder Road," and I must say, it was one of the most beautiful renditions I have ever heard. We could hear great from the outside—if you closed your eyes, you could almost visualize him."

With $1,000 and a kid at RCDS, you could have... at a pair of shows among Springsteen's most unusual and intimate, and the most cover-heavy since the days of the Castiles.



THE RUMSON COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL
75th Anniversary
"Loyal will our hearts e'er be..."

March 12, 2002

Dear RCDS Parent or Teacher,

Enclosed please find your ticket(s) for the private Bruce Springsteen Concert. As stated in the letter of February 25, lower school parents and teachers will be attending on Saturday, April 13, upper school parents and teachers on Sunday, April 14, and parents of both lower and upper school children on Sunday, April 14.

Please remember that each parent/teacher attending the concert must have a current picture I.D. that corresponds to the name on the guest list. Security will be tight. The tickets you hold are non-transferable and non-refundable.

We look forward to seeing you for another wonderful evening.

Sincerely,

Becky Lucas
President, Parent Council

Chad B. Small
Headmaster

P.S. A NJ State ID card is available at the Freehold Municipal Building, County Clerk's office for $10 (card), $3 (picture). It includes your name, address, phone number and picture.

April 13, 2002

Seven Nights to Rock
It Takes Two
Detroit Medley
Tell Him *featuring Patti*
Green River
Tell Me Why
The Boy From NYC
Ramblin' Gamblin' Man
Domino
Soul Man
Wonderful World
Twistin' the Night Away
Hey Tonight
You've Really Got a Hold on Me
Lucky Girl *featuring Patti*
Proud Mary
Get Out of Denver
Tutti Frutti *w/ Southside Johnny*
Darlington County *w/SSJ*
Glory Days
Twist & Shout
Thunder Road

In the soundcheck: "It's Not Unusual" (Tom Jones), a reggae version of "Sugar Sugar."

April 14, 2002

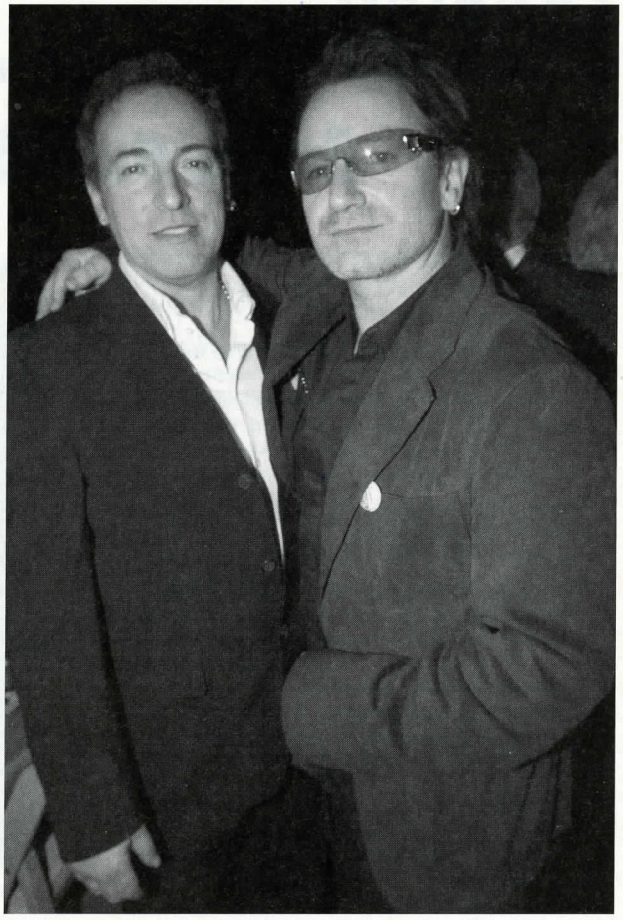
Roll Over Beethoven
Seven Nights to Rock
It Takes Two
Detroit Medley
Tell Him
Green River
Tell Me Why
The Boy From NYC
Ramblin' Gamblin' Man
Happy Birthday (to Max)
Domino*
Soul Man*
Ain't Too Proud to Beg*
Wonderful World*
Twistin' the Night Away*
Hey Tonight*
You've Really Got a Hold on Me*
It's All Over Now*
Get Out of Denver*
Darlington County*
Glory Days
Twist & Shout
Thunder Road

**w/ Max Weinberg*

In the soundcheck: "Good Times"

THE NEWS

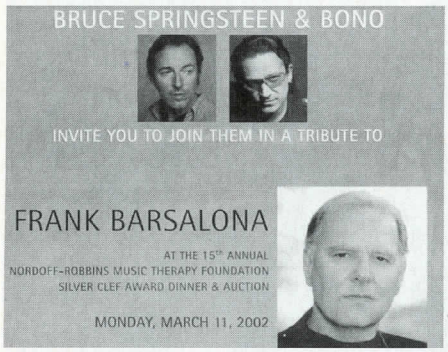
Me and You, Frank



KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE PHOTO

After 30 years operating Premier Talent Agency, industry legend Frank Barsalona has made some interesting friends. Bruce Springsteen, Bono, and Little Steven were among those honoring the promoter extraordinaire at NYC's Roseland Ballroom on March 11. Pete Townshend, who couldn't attend, sent a lengthy video tribute, while Steven reportedly brought the house down, in character as Silvio Dante.

In his own remarks, Springsteen recalled a 1976 hand from Barsalona that may just have saved the E Street Band: "The IRS had taken an interest in us. We'd never paid taxes in our lives. We're from New Jersey. It's part of the glory of living in the state!" Thanks to a $100,000 loan, not to mention booking the band around the world, "Frank saved our asses," Springsteen said, "and he invented the touring business."

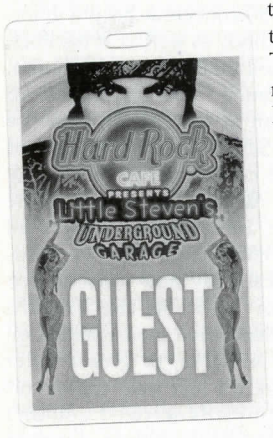


The event was a fundraiser for the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Foundation. Bono and Bruce both pitched in, participating in the live auction from Barsalona's record collection. Springsteen won Sir Lord Baltimore's out-of-print 1971 debut LP. He told Fox News' Roger Friedman, who reported from the event, "My first manager also managed Sir Lord Baltimore—I had to have it."

Barsalona's retirement has brought a shift for Springsteen, from Premier Talent to Creative Artists Agency. According to *Pollstar*, "Springsteen's longtime agent, Barry Bell [formerly with Premier Talent], will remain an outside consultant" with Springsteen now at CAA.

Back to the Garage

On Sunday, April 7 at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York, Little Steven Van Zandt launched his latest entertainment venture, "Hard Rock Café Presents Little Steven's Underground Garage." This nationally syndicated weekly radio show features the likes of the Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers, and the Pretty Things, as well as contemporary carriers of the Garage Rock torch.

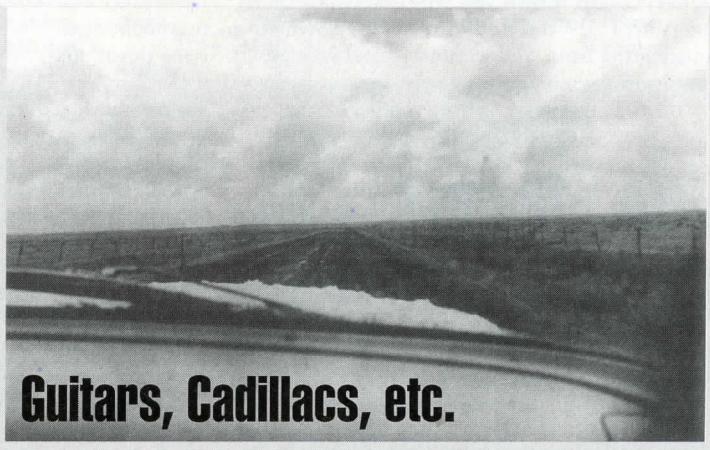


"The modern radio world is based on familiarity, and that's fine," Little Steven said. "But I grew up with the exact opposite, and that is what I want to bring back. I want to bring new music and build relationships with my listeners like I had relationships with my favorite deejays when I was a kid. That's fun and exciting, and that's what it's all about."

Among the special guests at the launch party were fellow Jersey-ites Joe Piscopo, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, as well as fellow Sopranos like Vincent Pastore, James Gandolfini, and Lorraine Bracco. The show is being carried on classic rock stations across the country. "He's a fixture at our station," said Zach Martin of New York's WAXQ. "I look forward to working with Stevie on this new show."

—Matthew S. Robinson

Visit www.littlestevensundergroundgarage.com for more information and a list of affiliates; www.hardrock.com/LittleSteven/archive.asp will have archives of past shows.



DAVID MICHAEL KENNEDY PHOTO

Guitars, Cadillacs, etc.

Coming soon to museum walls near you: "Springsteen: Troubadour of the Highway." No doberman, no Bruce Lee, just Springsteen and the car/highway imagery that has long been central to his work. Curator Colleen Sheehy tells *Backstreets* that "Troubadour" is "a multimedia exhibition featuring photography, video, music, and lyrics," all focusing on Springsteen's on-the-road themes. Featured photographers will include Edie Baskin, David Gahr, Annie Leibovitz, David Rose, Pamela Springsteen, Frank Stefanko, and David Michael Kennedy, who shot the haunting highway-scape on the cover of *Nebraska* (above). The traveling exhibition is being organized by the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, to open there in conjunction with Springsteen's 53rd birthday. The exhibition will run at the Weisman from September 22, 2002, to January 19, 2003, and hit the road from there to the Cranbrook Art Museum (Detroit) in the summer of 2003 and to the Experience Music Project (Seattle) in February-May 2004, with more stops to be determined. For more information, visit http://hudson.acad.umn.edu, and watch for a full report in an upcoming issue of *Backstreets*.

Let them eat cake

Bruce dedicates Vinyard Park

Springsteen's longtime friends and supporters Tex and Marion Vinyard were honored on May 18 with the naming of Vinyard Park. The site where the Vinyards' home once stood—now a small park, at Center and Jackson Streets, across from the Rug Mill Towers—was named as a tribute to the couple responsible for nurturing Springsteen's early career. Gordon "Tex" Vinyard, who died in 1988, managed Springsteen's first band. The couple's duplex was where Springsteen, George Theiss, and the rest of the Castiles got together to practice.

As Castiles founder Theiss told the *News Transcript* of Manalapan, the Vinyards were like surrogate parents to the band. He recalled Tex originally asking the kids practicing next door (at the Center Street home of drummer Bart Haynes) to turn down the volume. Vinyard soon wound up managing the band, and within a short time practices were moved into his home. The couple turned their dining room into a makeshift studio to provide practice space and a hangout to which other Freehold kids gravitated.

Both Theiss and Springsteen were on hand for the May 18 dedication of Vinyard Park, arriving together with Marion Vinyard. After a brief outdoor ceremony, the event moved out of the rain into the Freehold YMCA Community Center across the street, where both former Castiles spoke. Theiss said, "For the town to do this makes me feel very proud. To me this is our Penny Lane." Also offering words were Mayor Michael Wilson, who also hung out at the Vinyard home as a kid, and town councilman Kevin Coyne, who credited Carl Beams with the idea for the park.



ADRIANNE PETERPAUL PHOTO

Castiles Theiss and Springsteen with surrogate mom Marion Vinyard, May 18, 2002.

Previously, Springsteen publicly thanked the couple during his 1996 concert at his old grammar school, as well as at his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction. Dedicating "This Hard Land" to Marion at the '96 St. Rose of Lima School concert, Bruce said of the couple, "They let us play loud. When Tex would come home, he'd somehow have an extra microphone that we needed. I can't say how valuable that support was." At the Vinyard Park dedication, he expanded on those remarks, to give a fuller picture on just how important the Vinyards were: "I couldn't quantify how much it meant to my musical development and just to my life in general." Afterward, Bruce even cut and served the cake at the reception.

Marion Vinyard, who didn't give a speech but was clearly very moved by the event, told the *Asbury Park Press*, "I thought it was beautiful. I was really honored."

As the Castiles used to sing, "That's what you get."

PHOTOS CORTESY OF CARL BEAMS



Bruce's Speech



George came to my house on South Street one day, he was going out with my sister at the time, and he knocked on the door and said they were looking for a lead guitar player for the band. He brought me over to Tex and Marion's house for the first time.

If Tex was here today he would be insufferable... a terribly grumpy old bastard... actually, the park should have been named "Saint Marion's." But Tex was also somebody who opened his house completely, opened his heart completely, opened his wallet to us, and allowed us to turn it up as loud as we wanted when all of the other adults were trying to get us to turn it *down*.

It was a very unusual situation, and I suppose, perhaps, some mirror of it went on in towns all across the country where there were adults... Marion, you were probably... were you 30 at the time? *[Marion denies being 30 at the time, much laughter]* ...adults anyway... who are really the unsung heroes of rock 'n' roll, without which we wouldn't have had a place to practice and hone our craft.

And Marion... you feeding us those sandwiches every day, and Tex coming home on a Friday with his paycheck and going across the street and buying us a Shure microphone, or guitar strings, or anything that we needed. Long after Tex stopped managing me, when I came back and I needed somebody to co-sign a loan for me, for a decent guitar and amplifier... I gotta give the guy credit, he did it: he put his name on the line, and all I could say was, "Tex, I promise, I'm going to make these payments."

It was an amazing and very unusual thing, and I couldn't quantify how much it meant to my musical development and just to my life in general. I think as you go on, you carry with you a big part of the texture of the town from which you came. It becomes a part of your internal life, and I've carried that with me long, long since I've moved out of Freehold.

When I come to this neighborhood... what do I think of? I think of this building with its windows open and the sound of those looms clanging away in the middle of the summertime, in the heat. And I think of the way the street felt and the way this looked, and I always think of Tex and Marion Vinyard, whose kindness and compassion and amazing understanding and openness was such an important, important part of that time in my life. I'm just so happy about this for you, Marion, we love you very much, always. You and Tex, God bless.

—Thanks to Carl Beams for the transcription.

CONTEST

Backstreets Trivia Quiz III

Attack of the Ultimate Quiz

A watched pot never boils, and we have a feeling time is going to *draaaaag* between now and the end of July, when *The Rising* finally hits. But we've got just the thing to help pass the time. *Pop quiz, hotshot.*

It's been seven years since our last Ultimate Quiz (in *Backstreets* #48 and #49), seven years that two-time Trivia champ Bob Crane has been resting on his laurels. Well, laurels, yes; resting, no. He's actually been helping us come up with new questions for round three—that's right, if you've had your eye on the prize, this is your chance: in order to help us create the Ultimate Quiz III, Crane has taken himself out of the running. But be warned—he wants his successor to *earn* it.

Yep, there are some tough ones here. But as with each quiz, we've tried to find a balance—in level of difficulty, in "fields of knowledge"—so that everybody can have fun giving it a shot. To win, answer as many of these questions as completely as you can. The person with the most correct answers wins. In the case of a tie, we'll hold a playoff.

We'll have a grand prize for the winner, and some runner-up prizes too, all to be announced in the next issue along with the correct answers. But everyone has a chance of taking something home—we'll pick ten quiz-takers at random to receive a *Backstreets* T-shirt, whether they got one question right or all 30.

Not that we expect anyone to get all 30 right, so don't worry if you can't answer them all. No one ever has—not even our two-time champ. Wanna prove us wrong? Wanna show him up? Send your entry by August 15 to: Backstreets Ultimate Quiz III, PO Box 11079, Washington DC 20008 USA. Or email to editor@backstreets.com, or fax to (202) 232-2259. Include your name and address, and additional contact info (phone, email, etc.) will help in case of a playoff. Good luck.

—Quiz compiled by Christopher Phillps, Bob Crane, Andrew Massimino, Curtis Cleland, Erik Flannigan, and Jonathan B. Pont

1. Who is Mrs. Maria Ayala?

2. A *Village Voice* classified ad brought Roy Bittan and Max Weinberg to audition for the E Street Band; what two other instruments did the ad call for?

3. What was the name of Clarence's dressing room on the 1999-2000 tour?

4. On what official release can you find this sequence: "No Surrender," "Born in the U.S.A.," "Working on the Highway"?

5. The following are bandleaders in Springsteen songs. According to the lyrics, name their bands:
a. Little Willie
b. James Young
c. Little Melvin

6. Which Springsteen song has been officially released by Columbia in the most live versions?

7. Fill in the blank: "Between Heaven & Earth," "Father's Day," _____.

8. Name one song that references: New Jersey, an abandoned factory, a state trooper, a stolen car, Vietnam, a Thunder Road, a mansion on the hill, a lion's den, and a blasted TV.

9. *I was a child; we was running through the outlands; I made the call; I held you in my arms; the sky went black....* One more thing happened. What was it?

10. Name seven original Springsteen compositions he debuted live in the '90s that have never been officially released in any form.

11. Where would you have found two old down pillows, Green Bay paper towels, and 14 coats of white varnish?

12. "The E Street Shuffle" has incorporated Curtis Mayfield's "Move on Up" in performance; what other Mayfield-penned song was "Shuffle" based on?

13. What inspiration for a Springsteen character was on this earth from 1918-1997?

14. What do these songs have in common: "Highway Patrolman," "The New Timer," "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?," "Incident on 57th Street," "Meeting Across the River"?

15. What piece of wooden equipment was placed under the stage during the 1992-'93 tour?

16. Name the two longest *and* the two shortest recordings in Bruce's catalog of officially released songs.

17. The original photograph that was used on the cover of *Tracks* showed a pack of cigarettes on the table, along with some other pocket paraphernalia, all subsequently removed. Name the brand of cigarettes.

18. Name two Springsteen songs in which the narrator is a smoker.

19. Springsteen has played not only with Bob Dylan, but with two of Dylan's close relatives. Name them.

20. Rambo had a starring role in "Real Man." What other Springsteen song originally featured the character before leaving him on the cutting room floor?

21. What do "Hungry Heart," "Thunder Road," "Dancing in the Dark" and "Viva Las Vegas" have in common?

22. On the 1999-2000 tour, what was the first song heard in the arena *after* Bruce and the E Street Band finished their show?

The next two questions are relationship analogies, like you'd find on a standardized test, as in the example "Mexico : tequila = Russia : vodka."

23. "Cover Me" sleeve : '63 Impala = *Tunnel of Love* sleeve : _____.

24. Good-lookin' : Roberts = Handsome : _____.

25. What, according to Springsteen, is Latin for "Please clean up your room"?

26. Name all the songs on *Lucky Town* that feature harmonica.

27. What Academy Award-winning actor released a cover of Springsteen's "Fire" in 1983?

28. Springsteen has laid down one rule regarding photographs—that his _____ not be shown. Fill in the blank.

29. How many Springsteen concerts featured every song from *The Ghost of Tom Joad?*

30. Finish this line from a Springsteen composition. *(Hint:* The phrase in the blank is also the title of the song.)

"Marry me baby we'll have a lot of fun
All I heard was no no no no
I'll be crying til the _____."

INTERVIEW

Cleveland critic, Bruce fan, retires at 83

Never Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll

By Eric Schumacher-Rasmussen

When Jon Landau penned his famous "rock and roll future" line about Bruce in 1974, he was lamenting the unstoppable march of time, feeling old at the age of 27.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer*'s Jane Scott made a similar prediction about Springsteen when she saw him at the Allen Theater in August of 1975. "His name is Bruce Springsteen. He will be a superstar," she wrote. But she didn't bemoan how old she felt. That's just not a graceful thing for a 56-year-old to do.

Scott retired in April and turned 83 on May 3, but artists and fans admire and like her far too much to ever make any more an issue of her age than she ever did—which was never. Rather, the rock critic earned the respect of artists like Lou Reed and Ray Davies with her no-nonsense approach and unabashed love for the music. Scott started with the *Plain Dealer* on the society page in 1952, but soon began covering rock music, which was then in its infancy.

More than 20 years later, she championed Springsteen's cause after seeing his first Cleveland performance at the Agora Ballroom in 1974. That was before the city would become one of Bruce's first strongholds beyond the East Coast, and Scott recalled Agora owner Hank Laconti hustling folks from the pool room to go watch the show, just so it would look like he had some paying customers.

Things were different at the Allen Theater. Scott recalls Bruce looking like a "dock hand, with a hoop in one ear like a pirate. But his songs weren't all that crap about 'come live with me' or whatever way they were singing it then. He told these great stories, he was so full of energy, and his voice just took me. I knew in my heart that he was it. He really took me off my feet."

So she made her prediction, one that not surprisingly met with resistance from her editors. "They tried to talk me out of saying that he'd be a superstar. You don't make those kind of predictions," she laughs. "But I wouldn't budge, and they finally trusted me." As well they should have—by that time, Scott already had 20 years of rock journalism under her belt, and she had seen all the greats. She'd interviewed Paul McCartney, drank beer with Jim Morrison, and went with Jimi Hendrix to buy a car.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE SCOTT

Jane Scott's favorite Bruce memory: backstage with Springsteen at Cleveland's Severance Hall, 9/26/96.

But Bruce quickly became her favorite artist. "I hate to say that when I like so many," she laughs, "But deep down he really is."

Scott didn't miss a single local Springsteen show in the years since, and she remembers chasing his limousine after a 1978 Richfield Coliseum show, when he went over to the Agora again to join Southside Johnny onstage. Her favorite memory came in 1996, when she went backstage with her camera after Bruce played a Woody Guthrie tribute show there during his *Tom Joad* tour. She asked Bruce if she could take a picture of him, and, to her surprise, he said "no" and grabbed the camera.

"I thought for a second that he didn't like me," she said. "But then he handed it to a friend and said, 'You take it.' I liked the picture so much I gave a copy to the Hard Rock Café here in town."

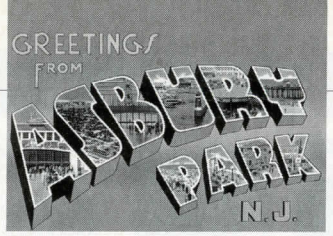
Scott enjoyed the *Ghost of Tom Joad* album and tour (she says she admires that Bruce isn't afraid to take chances), but her favorite song is "Dancing in the Dark." "It's not a Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers, frivolous 'dance around the hall' kind of thing," she says. "It's about somebody who can't get started, and there have been many times I've stared at the typewriter or computer screen and can't get going, so I know exactly what it means.

"Men know what that means, too, but that's a private thing," she adds. (Surely she's not blushing on the other end of the phone, but I am.)

She's quick to point out that, though she has met Bruce on several occasions, she doesn't consider herself a friend. But in addition to his songs and his voice, she admires Springsteen's personality, too.

"He's a good egg, isn't he?"

After 50 years, countless concert review bylines and artist interviews—the kind of life that's been known to turn even the most wide-eyed music journalist into a jaded cynic—you could still say the same thing about Jane Scott.



New records from White, Highway 9

On the White Track

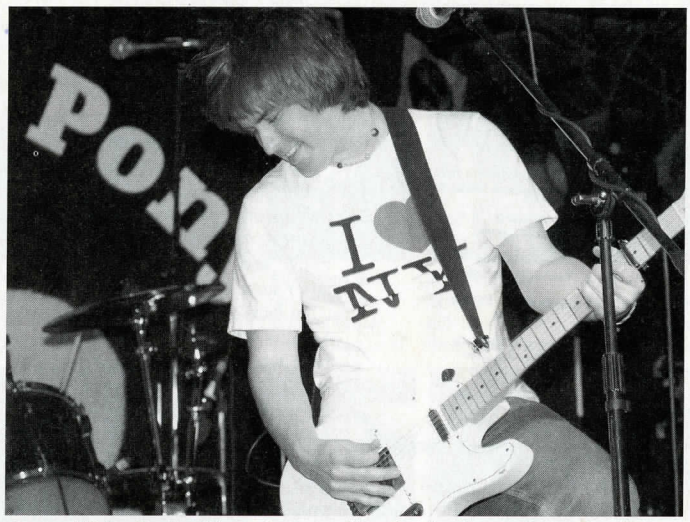
By Robert Makin

Just ten years ago, the careers of such Springsteen-influenced performers as John Eddie, Kilby Taylor, James Deely, Soul Engines and Bruce Tunkel stalled because of a close association with the Boss. But with Springsteen being a rock 'n' roll icon of the highest degree, a new generation of Whitmanesque rockers are gaining ground. Nationally they include Matthew Ryan and Dan Bern.

In New Jersey, there's none better than Matawan-raised Danny White. His high-energy stage charisma and strong lyrical sense have made White a new favorite at New York's legendary Bottom Line, the nightclub that took Springsteen's career to another level in 1975 with a five-night run of concerts considered among the best ever. White will be back at the Bottom Line in June. He's also well-liked at the Stone Pony, "The House that Bruce Built," in Asbury Park.

"There's a stature to those venues because of all the acts that have played there," says White, who's jammed with Springsteen on three occasions. "I had a real nice opportunity to talk with Alan Pepper, the man who runs the Bottom Line. He's a great guy, real up-front. I was sitting in his office, and he was telling me about one night when Neil Young walked in, grabbed an acoustic guitar and started playing, totally unannounced. A few seconds later, Bob Dylan walked in. He's got a ton of great stories like that. I could have talked to him all night."

White has been performing a solo acoustic set that features many new songs he'll record soon with his crackerjack band: lead guitarist Rob Michael, drummer Steve Carer, bassist Ken Long and his keyboard-playing brother, Jim Long. A five-song EP is expected to follow the exceptional charity single "Freedom to All (Right Now)," a tune inspired by Bob Marley, the lyrics of which were completed on September 11.



MICHAEL KAZMIERCZAK PHOTO

Danny White ♥s the Stone Pony, rocking for the Jersey Jams Fund.

"I drove out to Cleveland and went to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," White says. "One of the rooms has three big video screens... The year they got to Bob Marley's induction, they showed him kicking a soccer ball. But off in the distance, spray-painted on a wall, was 'Freedom come to all.' It just caught my eye. I jotted it down on a piece of paper and put it aside for future use... when everything happened. I got this chord progression down and remembered that piece of paper with that title. I had the song done the night of September 11." The politico-pop anthem has raised more than $1,000 dollars for the Sept. 11 Fund.

White's upcoming EP will be much brighter than the haunting, percussive single and its two full-length predecessors, *Is This All?* and *Beautifully Preserved Wrecks*. "It's got a nice groove to it," White says, "and I'm finding that the lyrics to the new songs are more optimistic, which I'm excited about."

White rocked the Stone Pony on Memorial Day weekend with LaBamba & the Hubcaps and John Eddie. He'll perform at a game for the Phillies minor league team, the Lakewood Blue Claws, on June 14. Visit www.dannywhitemusic.com for more info.

New Pony House Band to Come

Danny White also kicked off the Stone Pony House Band Contest on May 1. He lost the first week's battle by a couple of points to Matt Witte's New Blood Revival, one of New Jersey's biggest buzz bands. The Pony's contest continued every Wednesday in May, with week two pitting Blue Scream, Brown, Down Low Project and Secret C against each other. Other acts in the contest included Evelyn Forever, Chrissie Santonie, Sprout, Rhythm Plant, Red Engine 9, Jody Joseph, Jason Lockhart and Dibs.

The Pony has had a history of great house bands starting with Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes in 1974. Cats on a Smooth Surface replaced them and remained the house band into the early 1990s. The winner of the contest will be featured in the "Greetings" column in an upcoming issue of *Backstreets*. To see who won the contest, visit www.stoneponyonline.com

Highway 9 Debut on a Major Label

Highway 9, a roots-pop band that cut its teeth at the Pony and other Jersey Shore nightspots, is touring with Rusted Root in support of its Epic debut, *What in Sambill?* The title is a reference to the band's former name. Guitarist Gordon Brown publishes a newsletter by the same name about the band; free subscriptions are available by contacting tom_muzquiz@sonymusic.com.

Brown and Highway 9 vocalist Peter Scherer and bassist Rob Tanico were members of the early '90s group Mr. Reality, which recorded briefly for SBK Records. For more Highway 9 info, visit www.highwaynine.com.

Asbury Music Festival

The Asbury Music Festival, a celebration of music, art, and the rebirth of Asbury Park, was held May 25 at Convention Hall. Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes headlined, with Pete Yorn, Dave Edmunds, Graham Parker, Dan Bern, Marah, Sloan and Antigone Rising also on the bill. A portion of the net proceeds are to be donated to the City of Asbury Park Children's Welfare Trust Fund for recreational programs.

For concert promoter Tony Pallagrosi, formerly of the Jukes, producing the event is the realization of a long-term dream to bring a music festival to Asbury Park, a city with a long, rich musical tradition.

"This is the event I've always wanted to produce," Pallagrosi, co-owner of Red Bank-based Concerts East, told the *Asbury Park Press*. "I've always felt that Asbury Park is a natural home for a diverse, world-class music festival, and the time is right to begin working toward that goal."

Pallagrosi told the *Press* he believes Asbury Park has never emphasized the importance of its musical history. "I'm not just talking about Bruce Springsteen," Pallagrosi said. "I'm referring to the city's rich heritage of jazz, gospel, big band, R&B and more recently, Latin music. We may be starting off in the obvious place, but the ultimate goal of the festi-

Continued page 42

Drive All Night... to the Great White Way?

Staging Springsteen

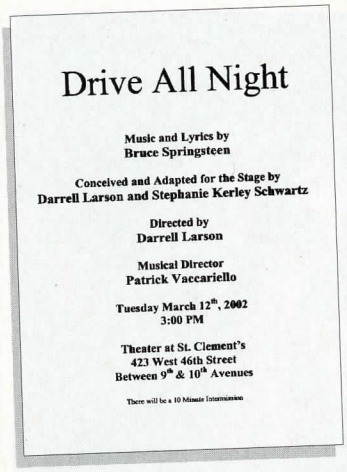
By Colleen Sheehy

Springsteen's music distills many elements from American culture, not only from musical history but also from literary, film, and theatrical traditions. Many listeners and critics have compared his song sagas, particularly the character-driven dramas on his first three albums, to Broadway plays. Now this comes full circle in a proposed Broadway-style play called *Drive All Night,* based completely on Springsteen's songs.

Unlike typical musical productions, the songs in *Drive All Night* serve as the only "dialogue" and provide the play's characters, dramatic tensions, and overall narrative structure. Collaborators Darrell Larson (director of Culture Project Theater on New York City's Lower East Side) and Stephanie Kerley Schwartz developed the concept. Larson and Schwartz fleshed out their ideas and song selections for the play over the past four years, consulting with longtime Springsteen producer Chuck Plotkin.

In March, Larson and Schwartz presented a staged "reading" of the play at a small theater in New York, with a young cast of four female and four male actors/singers. A rock band with guitars, sax, organ, and drums provided accompaniment. Larson read stage directions between songs, and the singers stood at microphones, using songbooks on music stands to remember lyrics to the roughly 37 Springsteen songs that made up the play.

Weaving together Springsteen's songs from throughout his career into an ongoing narrative, *Drive All Night* tells the story of two lovers, Eddie and Mary. Billy acts as an important secondary character, and a half-dozen other friends fill out the cast. The story follows Eddie and Mary's courtship, eventual marriage, and the rocky roads they and their friends travel. The singers aren't trying to be Bruce Springsteen telling the story but speak as the characters in the songs. Opening with "Drive All Night," the song list moves into "State Trooper" and then "Wild Billy's Circus Song," establishing movement between certain places—the amusement park, Mary's home—and the streets and highways where Eddie and Billy roam. The creators make use of some of


Drive All Night

Music and Lyrics by
Bruce Springsteen

Conceived and Adapted for the Stage by
Darrell Larson and Stephanie Kerley Schwartz

Directed by
Darrell Larson

Musical Director
Patrick Vaccariello

Tuesday March 12th, 2002
3:00 PM

Theater at St. Clement's
423 West 46th Street
Between 9th & 10th Avenues

There will be a 10 Minute Intermission

Springsteen's big hits and most familiar songs—"Thunder Road," "The River," "Brilliant Disguise"—as well as some more obscure works—"If I Was the Priest," "The Honeymooners," "My Lover Man."

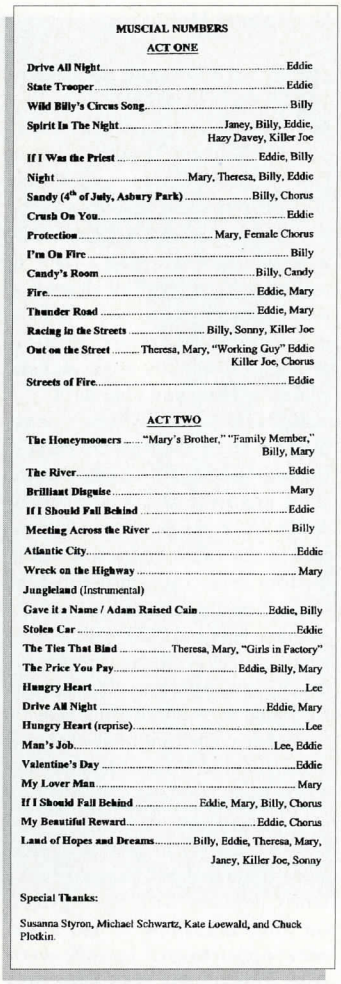
We know how carefully Springsteen has crafted each release to make an overall statement—a story line has evolved over the course of his albums—so to cut and paste songs together is a tricky endeavor. The juxtaposition of songs is probably the most problematic part of the production in this early phase of the piece. The ending of *Drive All Night* also borrowed too heavily, I thought, from the ending of Springsteen's concerts on the 1999-2000 tour with the E Street Band, finishing with "If I Should Fall Behind" and "Land of Hope and Dreams." Broadway stories tend toward neat resolutions, while Springsteen has resisted offering those in his music, a quality that could also make the play stronger. Ending the play with "My Beautiful Reward," which is a search and a question mark, rather than "Land of Hope and Dreams," could work in an interesting way.

Nonetheless, the performance offered stirring renditions of Springsteen's work, with many amazing moments of musical translation. It's one thing to hear another rock or country musician sing a Springsteen song—say, John Hiatt on "Johnny 99." It's another to hear a Broadway singer belt out "Hungry Heart" or "Wreck on the Highway." The performers were often stunning, displaying an impressive range of vocal qualities, styles, textures, and emotional readings. Some songs were real showstoppers, as when Mandy Gonzalez, playing Janey in "Spirit in the Night," sang a rockin' and sexy version of that song, or when the deep-voiced David St. Louis sang "Hungry Heart," to name just two highlights. Arrangements by Patrick Vaccariello drew out latent, and sometimes entirely unexpected, styles from Springsteen's music, as in gospel renditions of "If I Was the Priest" and "The Ties That Bind," the latter sung by the four women.

In fact, one of the most enjoyable aspects of this production was to hear women sing Springsteen. The four gals shook up the gender of Springsteen's songs, giving them a different twist or sometimes changing the meaning altogether (e.g., "I'm on Fire" sung from the girl's point of view). Of course this isn't a complete novelty, given Patti Smith's "Because the Night," Syd Straw's "Meeting Across the River," Chrissie Hynde's "Nebraska," and others. But in this production, there was more interplay between men and women within songs, different characters taking certain lines or verses, as when Mary sang the opening verse of "Brilliant Disguise" or Mary and Eddie took turns on verses of "Thunder Road."

Many of the songs brought out the girl-group qualities in some of Springsteen's music. They sounded so good sung by a female group and gave explicit nods to Springsteen's own love of the Ronettes, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, the Crystals, and others. These translations offered new insights into the elasticity of Springsteen's songs as lyric, story, and musical composition. In the end, *Drive All Night* argued for the ability of Springsteen's music to operate in powerful ways outside of his own performance sound and style.

The musical performances overall were a treat to witness, and it was obvious that the cast enjoyed singing these songs. Afterwards, when lead singer John Hickok (Eddie) was asked how he approached the project, he replied that he had really enjoyed learning Springsteen's music, which he hadn't known before. In translating the work, he didn't try to mimic Springsteen's style of singing or phrasing. "He has a really unique and difficult way of phrasing a line, and I'd ruin my voice if I tried to sing like he does," he said, as he headed off to prepare for his performance in that night's *Aida* on Broadway.


MUSCIAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

Drive All Night	Eddie
State Trooper	Eddie
Wild Billy's Circus Song	Billy
Spirit In The Night	Janey, Billy, Eddie, Hazy Davey, Killer Joe
If I Was the Priest	Eddie, Billy
Night	Mary, Theresa, Billy, Eddie
Sandy (4th of July, Asbury Park)	Billy, Chorus
Crush On You	Eddie
Protection	Mary, Female Chorus
I'm On Fire	Billy
Candy's Room	Billy, Candy
Fire	Eddie, Mary
Thunder Road	Eddie, Mary
Racing in the Streets	Billy, Sonny, Killer Joe
Out on the Street	Theresa, Mary, "Working Guy" Eddie Killer Joe, Chorus
Streets of Fire	Eddie

ACT TWO

The Honeymooners	"Mary's Brother," "Family Member," Billy, Mary
The River	Eddie
Brilliant Disguise	Mary
If I Should Fall Behind	Eddie
Meeting Across the River	Billy
Atlantic City	Eddie
Wreck on the Highway	Mary
Jungleland (Instrumental)	
Gave it a Name / Adam Raised Cain	Eddie, Billy
Stolen Car	Eddie
The Ties That Bind	Theresa, Mary, "Girls in Factory"
The Price You Pay	Eddie, Billy, Mary
Hungry Heart	Lee
Drive All Night	Eddie, Mary
Hungry Heart (reprise)	Lee
Man's Job	Lee, Eddie
Valentine's Day	Eddie
My Lover Man	Mary
If I Should Fall Behind	Eddie, Mary, Billy, Chorus
My Beautiful Reward	Eddie, Chorus
Land of Hopes and Dreams	Billy, Eddie, Theresa, Mary, Janey, Killer Joe, Sonny

Special Thanks:

Susanna Styron, Michael Schwartz, Kate Loewald, and Chuck Plotkin.

Springsteen needs to approve the use of his music for *Drive All Night* before the play can move forward into full production. Although permission has not yet been granted, that doesn't mean it won't be. Larson is continuing to refine the storyline and hopes the production will eventually be staged. That's good, because many other Springsteen fans will want to hear this powerful translation of his music, even if they argue for hundreds of alternate set lists in their own imagined Springsteen musicals.

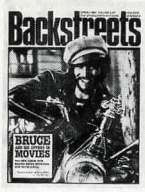
Colleen Sheehy is the Director of Education at the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, where she is also adjunct professsor in American Studies. She is curator of the upcoming exhibition, "Springsteen: Troubadour of the Highway."

Backstreets Back Issues

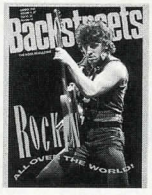
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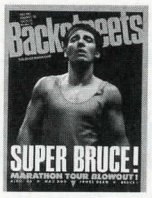
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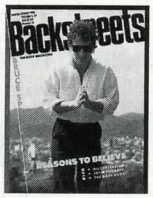
#9 Bruce in the movies; Beaver Brown; Boss books.....$8



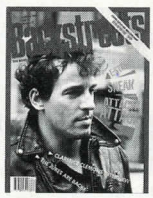
#14 Rockin' the world: tour '85; Boss club; R.E.M. interview.....$5



#15 Super Bruce! '85 tour; Sun City; Mad Dog interview.....$5



#16 Bruce's political message; N. Lofgren; John Fogerty.....$5



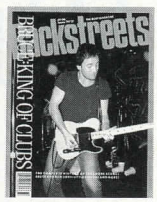
#17 E Street Sneak Attack; Clarence int.; Boom Carter...$5



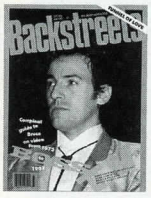
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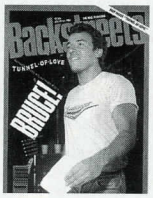
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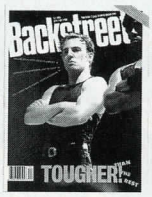
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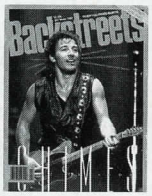
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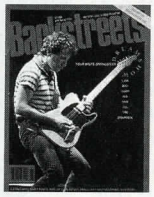
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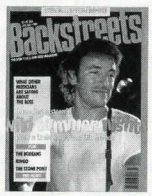
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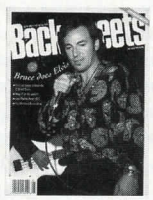
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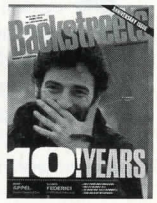
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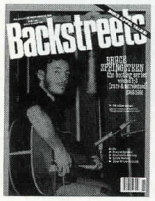
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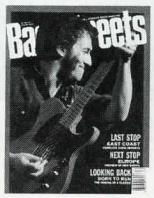
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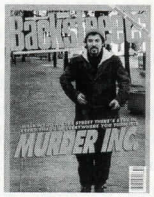
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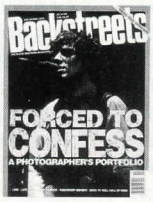
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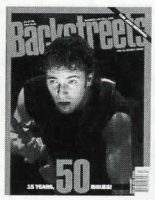
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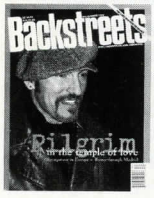
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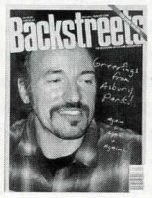
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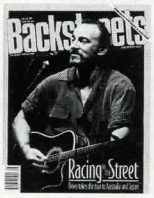
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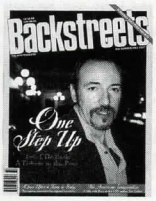
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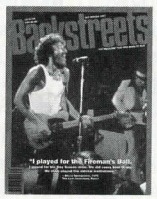
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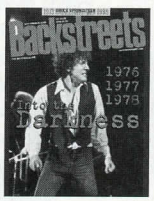
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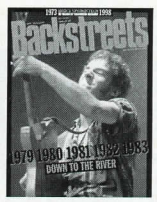
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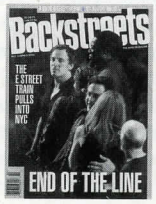
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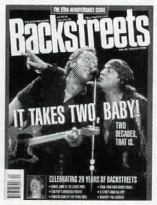
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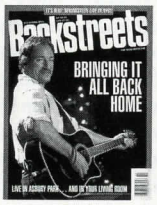
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Jukes back in action

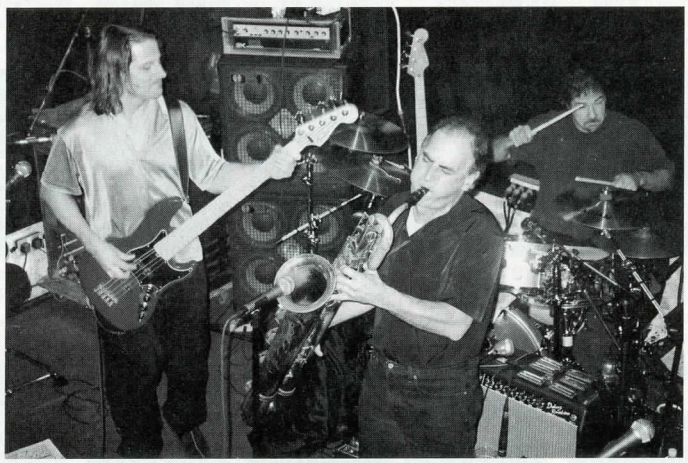
Southside's Blues Revival

By Mike Saunders

Southside Johnny's career has seen many peaks and troughs, setbacks and comebacks, perhaps none more dramatic than those of the past decade. In 1992, touring extensively behind the *Better Days* album, he looked set for a long-overdue taste of success, but it was not to be, thanks largely to the changing tides of musical fashion and record company priorities. In early 1996, burned out by divorce, family bereavement and numerous unsuccessful attempts to secure a new record deal, he relocated to Nashville and effectively disappeared for two years. Bouncing back from his depression in the fall of 1997, he reformed the Asbury Jukes, played a handful of seasonal shows, and resumed touring on a regular basis the following summer. With their performing credentials firmly re-established, the Jukes celebrated the dawning of the new millennium onstage in Atlantic City, NJ. "Music is fun again," Southside subsequently told the *New York Times*. "I was glad to come back for the right reason."

The year 2000 brought several important developments in the Southside organization, with the designing of his own website (which came online in the late spring), the formation of his own label (Leroy Records) and the release in November of *Messin' with the Blues*, the first new full-length Asbury Jukes album in eight years. Through the website, Southside was now able to publicize and sell new recordings, announce forthcoming concerts, and speak directly to the band's worldwide fanbase without any record company involvement. It was a significant leap forward and the dawning of a new era of independence and control.

Having included Bon Jovi's bass player Hugh McDonald and keyboard player Scott Healey of the Max Weinberg Seven (among others) along the way, the Jukes' line-up had developed into a permanent unit by this time and continues to remain stable. Accompanying Southside are guitarist/right-hand man Bobby Bandiera and sax player Joey Stann (both now in their 18th year with the band), keyboardist Jeff Kazee and trumpet player Chris Anderson (four years), bass player Steve "Muddy" Shews and drummer Louie Appel (21 months), plus Ed Manion on sax, who first became a Juke in 1976 and has drifted in and out of the band ever since. Additionally, Mark Pender (trumpet) and La Bamba (trombone) make regular appearances with the Jukes in the States whenever their many other commitments allow it.



MIKE SAUNDERS PHOTO

Across the pond: the Jukes rock Southampton, October 25, 2001.

In 2001, the Asbury Jukes undertook their most extensive series of concerts since Southside reformed the band. In addition to their U.S. touring schedule, the Jukes crossed the Atlantic for the first time in almost a decade. Although Southside had played a handful of acoustic shows across the pond in more recent times, the full electric band with horn section hadn't set foot in Europe since the summer of 1993. "The Jukes will be winging our way to Europe this month," commented Southside on the website. "Much like the Visigoths descending on Rome or the Vikings landing in Britain, we are sure to leave a size 14EEE footprint in the sands of time. The horn section alone should be able to duplicate the ravages of the locust plague in Egypt. Picture it: Louie in the British House of Lords. Speech, then drum solo. Bobby eating tripe in a fine French restaurant. Kazee letting loose on the great organ in the cathedral in Cologne."

Despite the long absence, minimal advance promotion and even less media attention, the Jukes were still able to virtually sell out their seven-date U.K. tour in June 2001, with long-term fans and many new converts flocking to appearances in Southampton, Beverley, Newcastle, Sheffield, Brierley Hill, Cardiff, and London. Following that, the band played a number of shows on the European mainland. Beginning with headlining club appearances in Brussels and Amsterdam, they later joined the Bon Jovi European tour for an indoor arena performance in Paris and outdoor stadium appearances in Cologne, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Zurich and Padua. For these support gigs, the Jukes trimmed their usual set down to an hour or less.

The visit was so successful that a second U.K. tour, consisting of an additional ten shows, was promptly booked for October, 2001. This time around, the band appeared in London, Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow, Manchester, Bilston, Nottingham, Leeds, Croydon and Southampton. The addition of a last-minute acoustic performance in Sheffield on October 22 (featuring Southside, Bobby Bandiera and Jeff Kazee only) brought the grand total to 18 shows, the highest number of Jukes performances in England, Wales and Scotland in any year since 1977, when they made their overseas debut supporting Graham Parker and the Rumour.

The venues on the two U.K. tours ranged in size from the cramped Robin R&B Club in Brierley Hill (actually the back

Summer with Southside

6/7	Milwaukee WI
6/8	Minneapolis, MN
6/14	Cincinnati, OH
6/15	Cleveland, OH
6/21	Pittsburgh, PA
6/29	Atlantic City, NJ
7/5	Indianapolis, IN
7/7	Harrisburg, PA
7/26	Westbury, LI
7/29	Amagansett, NY
7/30	Uncasville, CT
8/1	Albany, NY
8/8	Rochester, NY
8/26	Pt. Pleasant, NJ
8/27	Pt. Pleasant, NJ
8/31	Avon, CO

Back in the U.K., 2002

10/15	Southampton
10/16	Milton Keynes
10/17	Shrewsbury
10/18	Cardiff
10/20	Nottingham
10/25	Glasgow
10/26	Newcastle
10/27	Sheffield
10/29	Manchester
10/30	Bilston
10/31	Bradford
11/2	London

These are the officially announced dates as of press time; visit www.southsidejohnny.org for more details and additional dates.

To subscribe to the Southside Digest internet newsletter, send a blank email message to southside-subscribe@topica.com.

room of a pub) to the spacious Fairfield Concert Hall in Croydon (with its plush seating and acoustic paneling); from the ornate triple-balconied Opera House in Newcastle, where the names of classical composers were carved into the decorative plasterwork, to the rusting Renfrew Ferry, permanently moored on the river Clyde in Glasgow. "The captain has just informed me that we're 30 miles off of Iceland," joked Southside as he left the stage.

Never the same from one night to the next, the U.K. setlists contained their fair share of favorites such as "I Don't Want to Go Home," "The Fever," "Talk to Me" and "Hearts of Stone," but also featured numerous selections from the new album, particularly "Gin-soaked Boy," "Sinful," "Cadillac Jack" and "Living With the Blues," all of which blended seamlessly with the older material. Covers included "You Don't Know Like I Know" (Sam and Dave), "Help Me" (Sonny Boy Williamson), "Across 110th Street" (Bobby Womack), "Do Right Woman" (the Flying Burrito Brothers) and "Georgia on My Mind" (Ray Charles), plus Rolling Stones and Who medleys comprising "As Tears Go By," "Ruby Tuesday," "My Generation," "Won't Get Fooled Again" and "Pinball Wizard."

The longest of the European Bon Jovi support sets took place in Hamburg, where the Jukes opened with "On the Beach" and also included "I Played the Fool," "All Night Long" and "Boom Boom," a tribute to the late John Lee Hooker. Near the end, the band was joined by longtime fan and supporter Jon Bon Jovi and keyboard player David Bryan for versions of "I've Been Working Too Hard" and "Having a Party."

The Glasgow show was given a five-star rating in one local paper, which commented: "Glasgow has hosted U2 and Oasis already this year, so when Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes were introduced as the best rock and roll band in the world, it was a fairly stunning claim. Four songs into a two-and-a-half-hour set, not even Bono or the Gallaghers would have bothered arguing the point. Even Southside's pal and mentor Bruce Springsteen would have had trouble living with the best white soul singer in the world in a performance Glasgow is unlikely to have seen bettered."

A few nights later in Bilston, the verdict was much the same: "Southside Johnny Lyon has few peers as a stage performer, and a night with the Asbury Jukes is as good as it gets in these days of musical puppets dancing to the tune of faceless corporations dictated by moneymen. Southside tore into all his classics in a high-octane two-hour-plus extravaganza. If you closed your eyes, it wasn't too fanciful to imagine yourself in a New Jersey shoreline bar rather than downtown Bilston. It really was that good."

Although the band took a two-month break from the road after the October U.K. tour, Southside kept busy with guest appearances at all five of Bruce Springsteen's holiday shows in Asbury Park in early December. Together with Nils Lofgren, La Bamba and Ed Manion, he also joined Bobby Bandiera and his band further down the boardwalk at the Stone Pony after the penultimate show.

Southside and the Jukes once again celebrated New Year's Eve at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank. The show opened with "Better Days" and later included "I'm So Anxious," "This Time It's For Real" and "Coming Back." "Rosa" and "Gladly Go Blind" (from the rare *Ruff Stuff* mini-albums) also made an appearance, as did covers of "Unchain My Heart" (Ray Charles), "Forever" (Little Steven), the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" (with Bobby Bandiera on lead vocals) and Tom Waits' "New Coat of Paint," a rare selection from the Jukes' 1984 album, *In the Heat*. As the midnight hour drew near, Southside called for a quick blast of the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated," then brought on support act Gary U.S. Bonds (whose band included several Jukes) to ring in the new year with "Having a Party."

The Asbury Jukes began 2002 with a mini-tour which included stops in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Boston and Hartford. Current indications suggest that there will be no let-up in their busy schedule as the year progresses. At the time of writing, an extensive schedule of summer concerts in the U.S. (including dates in the Midwest and Florida) is being booked. The band also hopes to perform in previously neglected areas such as the South, Texas, Colorado and the West Coast at some point, and another three-week U.K. tour has been confirmed for October.

In addition, work on a follow-up to *Messin' with the Blues* has begun at Jon Bon Jovi's studio in New Jersey. "The Jukes and I are hoping to get back in the studio to record a 'soul' album," Southside reported in February. "By 'soul' I mean a number of the traditional R&B/Soul styles that I loved as a youth. There will be some original songs and some covers. The CD should be out sometime this year." A few weeks later, he provided a progress update. "Some of the titles so far are 'Baby Don't Lie,' 'I Won't Sing,' two Jeff Kazee tunes, 'Lost' and 'Change For You,' and some others. We may also include 'Somebody to Love You' by Delbert McClinton, which is on *More Ruff Stuff*, but this will be a full band remake, not a demo. Audience fave 'Tired Skin' (by Alejandro Escovedo) has also been recorded, and there is a possibility of one or two Dusty Springfield remakes. The bulk of the material will be new songs by me, Jeff Kazee, Bobby, and whomever else we can con into contributing to this blight on the face of the earth."

Last year's European trip was a logical extension of the band's recent touring strategy, reacquainting them with fans on the other side of the ocean, widening their horizons and increasing their options. Whenever it appears, the new album will further expand the Asbury Jukes' recorded legacy and provide yet more new material for inclusion in the live shows. These projects represent further stages in Southside's ongoing career rejuvenation, another step up the ladder away from the dark days of the mid-nineties. He may never experience massive commercial success, but he has now reached a place where he feels comfortable, both personally and professionally.

For Southside, it's always been more about the emotional high of performing than the trappings of stardom. As long as he can make a living singing to an appreciative audience anywhere in the world, release music on the internet and avoid corporate bullshit in its many forms, he'll be a happy man. "I never wanted lots of money, and I certainly wouldn't want to be famous," he said last year. "My tomato plants are blooming and I have a full bottle of Jack Daniel's in the closet, so everything's okay!"



MIKE SAUNDERS PHOTO

LUCKY TOUCH

YOU GOT YOUR HUMAN TOUCH IN MY LUCKY TOWN!

Ten years after Bruce lays his cards on the table, we reshuffle the deck

Waiting for Springsteen's new rock record, we started thinking back to his last one. And back... and further back... an entire decade. In late 1991 and early 1992, fans were feeling that familiar anticipation, as the long-awaited follow-ups to *Tunnel of Love* (and what would be his last new studio rock LPs for more than ten years) were about to hit. What came on March 31 of that year, the simultaneous release of *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, remains arguably the most questioned move of Springsteen's career. Other than breaking up the E Street Band—which, of course, isn't entirely unrelated.

Depending on who you listen to, *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* are either Bruce's most drastic misstep, or the most drastically underrated albums in his catalog. Everyone agrees they contain some fine songs. Exactly how fine, how many, which ones, and what to do with the rest of them is another thing. Many fans have entertained the idea that Springsteen could have crafted a stronger single-album from the material. As Anthony DeCurtis wrote in *Rolling Stone* back in '92, "The aesthetic and thematic aims of *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* would have been better realized by a single, more carefully shaped collection that eliminated their half dozen or so least essential songs." To mark the albums' ten-year anniversary, we set out to test that theory with a poll on backstreets.com.

Waitaminute. *Eliminating* Springsteen songs? *"Least essential"* Springsteen songs? Well... yeah, that's the idea. We asked for the 24 songs to be whittled down to half that, for a 12-song album called *Lucky Touch*. First we made him king, then we made him pope, then we brought the rope!

Not that many fans wish they could un-hear any of the 24 songs on *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*. But for an alternate-universe album—and for the real world in which home tapers and burners can listen to anything in any damn order we please—we wanted to take a shot at what is surely one of the hardest parts of Springsteen's job: selecting and sequencing an album.

So the idea for the poll was simple: make one record out of two. We didn't ask if you thought it *should* be done, or if you actually would do it, if given the chance. But 1,439 of us did. And many of us have been making (and re-making) these lists on our own for the better part of a decade. Gary Hurst writes, "Back in '92, I recorded some songs on a C-60 tape for this exact purpose. How many other fans did the same, I wonder?" Darryl Morden did, for one, who tells us, "I actually made a tape similar to this a decade ago called *A Human Touch in a Lucky Town*."

Not everyone has had the same urge to meddle. "I am probably in the minority, but I would not reduce the two albums to just one. The remaining tracks would just end up on unofficial sources at a much higher cost and available to fewer fans," writes Chris Higgerson from the real world. "For all the complaints about material not making it out of the vaults I can't understand the criticism that too much was released here. Perhaps there would be fewer complaints if these albums featured the E Streeters." And then there was Michael Evans, who submitted a ten-song track listing, identical to that of *Lucky Town*: "Yes, I realize it lacks imagination, but nothing about *Lucky Town* needs to be changed. I was surprised as anyone to find this out when doing this poll. Sure it was tempting to dump 'Local Hero' off, but really it fits in just fine where it is... and nothing really on the other album deserves to be included in its place."

It should be noted that if it hadn't been for Bob Dylan's "Series of Dreams," we might not be in this enviable predicament in the first place. In *Songs* Springsteen writes: "At the end of (recording) the *Human Touch* album, I still felt I needed another song." Legend has it that while riding around in L.A. and listening to the Dylan tune, Springsteen was inspired to write "Living Proof," and that opened the floodgates for the rest of *Lucky Town*. Judging by the results of this poll, fans were most pleased with that breakthrough. After spending close to two years compiling what became *Human Touch*, Springsteen cranked out *Lucky Town* in a fraction of the time, and seven of those ten tracks were chosen by fans to be included here. Six of

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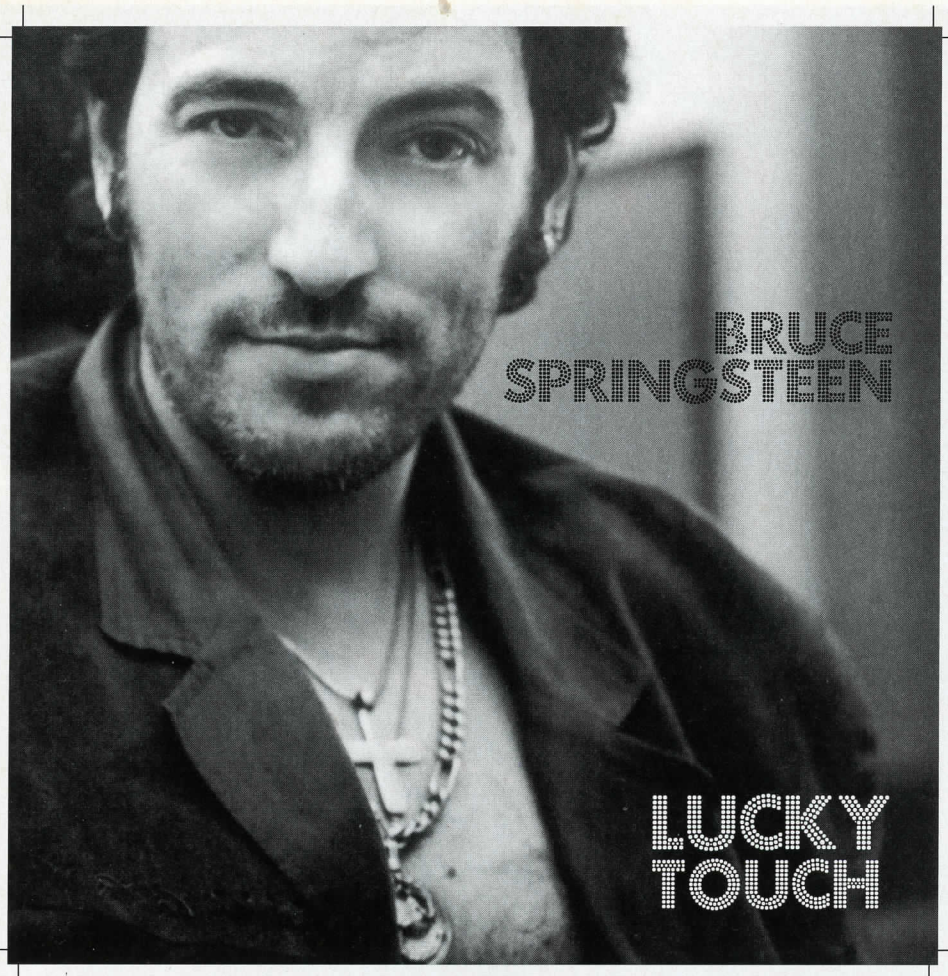
THE BEST

The top 12, according to the number of inclusions on* Lucky Touch *track listings submitted by readers. Songs marked with an asterisk (*) received the most picks for their respective slots on the final* Lucky Touch *track listing (see cover art on page 19).

*Lucky Town**	*1,332*
*Better Days**	*1,325*
*Human Touch**	*1,307*
*If I Should Fall Behind**	*1,297*
*Living Proof**	*1,156*
*My Beautiful Reward**	*1,096*
Leap of Faith	*1,084*
Roll of the Dice	*1,018*
*I Wish I Were Blind**	*987*
*Local Hero**	*954*
Real World	*735*
Man's Job	*729*

THE REST

57 Channels	*653*
Souls of the Departed	*652*
With Every Wish	*649*
Soul Driver	*591*
Book of Dreams	*579*
The Big Muddy	*499*
All or Nothin' at All	*476*
Cross My Heart	*426*
Gloria's Eyes	*421*
The Long Goodbye	*309*
Pony Boy	*261*
Real Man	*107*



STACKING THE DECK

This wasn't a simple roll of the dice—many of the* Lucky Touch *track listings submitted were carefully constructed labors of love. Here are just a few of the more than 1,400 poll entries we recieved—and a few of our own.

Some tough calls, but I think the right progression is to start the album with those tracks which clearly convey a need for a connection *(HT)* and progress to those which convey a sense of fulfillment and inner peace *(LT)*.

Human Touch
Soul Driver
I Wish I Were Blind
Roll of the Dice
Real World
Better Days

Lucky Town
Local Hero
Book of Dreams
If I Should Fall Behind
Living Proof
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Pony Boy
B2. Leap of Faith

John McGuire
New York, NY

Lucky Town is a great album which I don't think needs to be resequenced to improve upon... However, I would like to create a 14-song alternative to *Human Touch* using outtakes from those sessions, songs that were later included on *Tracks*.

30 Days Out
Roll of the Dice
Soul Driver
Trouble in Paradise
Part Man, Part Monkey
Human Touch
With Every Wish

Real World
Seven Angels
Trouble River
Sad Eyes
Man's Job
I Wish I Were Blind
The Long Goodbye

Paul Heider
Chicago, IL



Human Touch
Cross My Heart
Real Man
Roll of the Dice
With Every Wish
Real World

Lucky Town
Better Days
Local Hero
Leap of Faith
My Beautiful Reward
If I Should Fall Behind

B1. 30 Days Out
B2. Happy

Kathy Knapp
Portland, OR

On side one, defeat and resignation are gradually pushed aside by glimmers of hope for a better, full life. On side two, a newly unearthed sense of deservedness, of happiness, love, and companionship, provide a clear view to the rewards that self-0discovery and an open heart can bring.

The Big Muddy
Souls of the Departed
I Wish I Were Blind
Cross My Heart
Real World
My Beautiful Reward

Human Touch
The Long Goodbye
Lucky Town
Better Days
Living Proof
If I Should Fall Behind

B1. Pony Boy
B2 : Roll of the Dice

Marya Morris
Chicago, IL

More lists on page 20

Leap of Faith
If I Should Fall Behind
Souls of the Departed
Local Hero
Better Days
Book of Dreams

With Every Wish
Human Touch
I Wish I Were Blind
57 Channels
Gloria's Eyes
Pony Boy

Sara Buske
Hamburg, Germany

Better Days
Local Hero
Man's Job
Real Man
Lucky Town
If I Should Fall Behind

Human Touch
All or Nothin' at All
I Wish I Were Blind
Leap of Faith
Roll of the Dice
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Happy
B2. 57 Channels (LA Riot Mix)

Tony Szoka
Willow Grove, PA

For "Soul Driver," the version of the '92/93 tour with just him and Bittan; for "57 Channels," the industrial/funk live version. "Real World": piano only.

Human Touch
Soul Driver
57 Channels
The Big Muddy
Souls of the Departed
Local Hero

Better Days
The Long Goodbye
Living Proof
Leap of Faith
If I Should Fall Behind
Real World

Roy Minamide
Columbus, OH

Human Touch
Soul Driver
Cross My Heart
With Every Wish
Roll of the Dice
Real World

Lucky Town
If I Should Fall Behind
The Big Muddy
Living Proof
Souls of the Departed
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Real World (Christic)
B2. Soul Driver (Christic)

John Mayer
Hollywood, CA

Having been lucky enough to see one of the Christic shows, I can't seem to accept any other version of "Real World" than the raw, passionate version performed those nights.

Lucky Town
Better Days
Soul Driver
Real World (solo piano)
Human Touch
If I Should Fall Behind

Living Proof
Leap of Faith
I Wish I Were Blind
Man's Job
The Long Goodbye
My Beautiful Reward

B1. 30 Days Out
B2. Leap of Faith (live)

Cheryl Pawelski
Altadena, CA

I chose to start the record the way Bruce most often started the tour, with the opening three cuts from *Lucky Town*. Bruce got it right on tour when he swapped the order of "Lucky Town" and "Local Hero."

Better Days
Local Hero
Lucky Town
I Wish I Were Blind
Roll of the Dice
Real World

Living Proof
Souls of the Departed
With Every Wish
Soul Driver
If I Should Fall Behind
My Beautiful Reward

B1. All or Nothin' at All
B2. The Long Goodbye

Colin Dale
Trenton, ON, Canada

Leap of Faith
Souls of the Departed
Human Touch
Better Days
Man's Job
Local Hero

Lucky Town
Gloria's Eyes
If I Should Fall Behind
All or Nothin' at All
I Wish I Were Blind
Real Man

B1. Book of Dreams
B2. Living Proof

Ross Currie
Clydebank, Scotland

Funny that I tried so hard to mix up the albums, but in the end, it fell into a pretty clear split. Tried going for the real autobiographical story here.

Human Touch
All or Nothin' at All
Roll of the Dice
I Wish I Were Blind
The Long Goodbye
Local Hero

Better Days
Leap of Faith
If I Should Fall Behind
Living Proof
Souls of the Departed
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Real World (Christic)
B2. 57 Channels (Christic)

Jon Phillips
San Mateo, CA

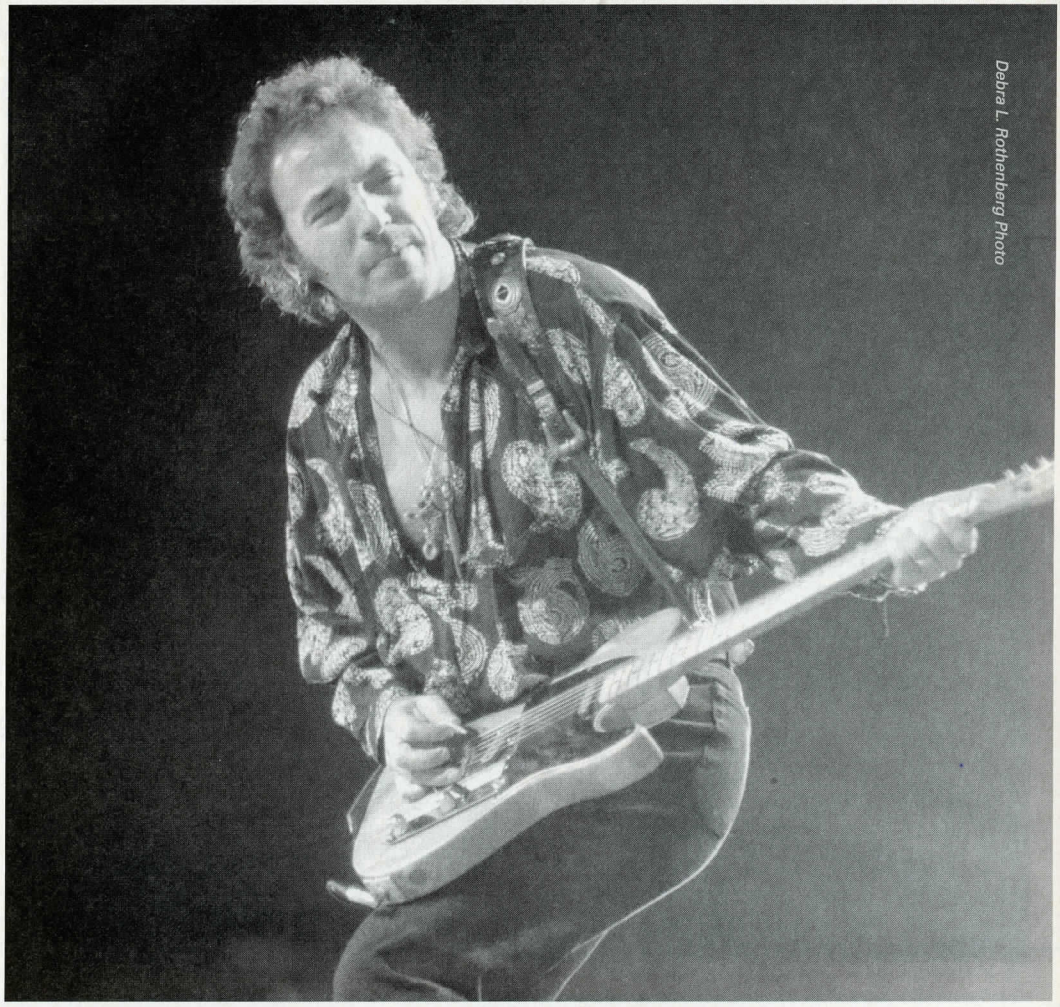
Heavy on the acoustic songs to close the album, but there's just not a way to lose any of them, and they finish a good story from the joyful rocking rediscovery of "Better Days" to the easy satisfaction of hangin' with the family in "Reward" and "Pony Boy."

Better Days
Lucky Town
Local Hero
The Big Muddy
Living Proof
I Wish I Were Blind

Human Touch
Roll of the Dice
Real World (solo piano)
If I Should Fall Behind
My Beautiful Reward
Pony Boy

B1. 57 Channels (Christic)
B2. 10th Ave. (Christic)

Glen Gaston
Toronto, ON, Canada,


Debra L. Rothenberg Photo

I'm not a huge critic of the two albums; they're flawed, certainly, but contain plenty of good (if not quite great) Bruce material. The question to me remains: what would these albums have sounded like with the extra oomph of the E Street Band? We'll never know...

Lucky Town
Local Hero
If I Should Fall Behind
The Big Muddy
Living Proof
Roll of the Dice

Human Touch
Gloria's Eyes
Real World
The Long Goodbye
I Wish I Were Blind
My Beautiful Reward

B1. 57 Channels (Little Steven Remix)
B2. Souls of the Departed

Larry McShane
Cedar Grove, NJ

I went with a fall-and-redemption sort of theme here (with "Human Touch" serving as a sort of prologue, to be literary). Three betrayal songs up front, a little regret, and an ease into something new and real.

Human Touch
Cross My Heart
The Big Muddy
Gloria's Eyes
With Every Wish
I Wish I Were Blind
Man's Job
Better Days
Lucky Town
If I Should Fall Behind
Real World
Living Proof

B1. Soul Driver
B2. My Beautiful Reward

Michael Cowgill
Manassas, VA

It is with a heavy heart I leave out "Real World"—the way it was produced for *Human Touch* just ruined it completely. Surprisingly, even to myself, I have also left out "Human Touch." It's a good song, but I can't make it fit with my vision!

Local Hero
Soul Driver
Roll of the Dice
Man's Job
I Wish I Were Blind
The Long Goodbye

Lucky Town
Living Proof
With Every Wish
Souls of the Departed
Better Days
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Gloria's Eyes
B2. Leap of Faith

Karsten S. Andersen
Soeborg, Denmark

I turned around the title of this album a bit and worked with *Human Town* instead... As a marriage and family therapist, I find that Bruce's music provides heartfelt insights about how men and women live in the "Human Town." These tracks provide a dialogue about love, risks, vulnerability, the bottom line, uncertainty, and the pleasure of sex. It can't get better than that.

Living Proof
Leap of Faith
Real World
Human Touch
Souls of the Departed
All or Nothin' at All

Cross My Heart
Man's Job
The Long Goodbye
Better Days
If I Should Fall Behind
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Book of Dreams
B2. 57 Channels

Charlene Portnoy
Minneapolis, MN

It still wouldn't be a classic record. Besides some clunkers, it was the production and arrangements that really ruined *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*. The nadir of Bruce's career. And the artwork sucked too.

Human Touch
Soul Driver
Cross My Heart
Local Hero
Lucky Town
Better Days

Book of Dreams
Living Proof
If I Should Fall Behind
Leap of Faith
Souls of the Departed
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Man's Job
B2. 30 Days Out

Ben Lazar
New York, NY

Lucky Town
Living Proof
With Every Wish
Real World
I Wish I Were Blind
If I Should Fall Behind

Human Touch
Local Hero
Leap of Faith
Book of Dreams
Better Days
My Beautiful Reward

Erik Flannigan
Associate Editor

Cross My Heart
Lucky Town
I Wish I Were Blind
The Big Muddy
Human Touch
With Every Wish

Real World
Living Proof
Souls of the Departed
If I Should Fall Behind
The Long Goodbye
My Beautiful Reward

Chris Phillips
Editor

Lucky Town
The Long Goodbye
I Wish I Were Blind
Soul Driver
The Big Muddy
Human Touch

Leap of Faith
Better Days
Real World
If I Should Fall Behind
Living Proof
My Beautiful Reward

B1. Loose Change
B2. Happy

Andrew Massimino
Assistant Editor

Human Touch
Local Hero
Cross My Heart
Man's Job
The Big Muddy
Living Proof

Lucky Town
Leap of Faith
I Wish I Were Blind
The Long Goodbye
Souls of the Departed
My Beautiful Reward

Jonathan Pont
Associate Editor

It was hard for me to leave out songs like "Cross My Heart" and "Living Proof"—I guess I would have made two albums too!

—Tara Sonnenberg

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the top seven vote-getters were *Lucky Town* compositions.

A ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR!

We tallied the results by first determining which 12 songs received the most "votes"—in other words, the 12 songs that appeared most often on the 1,439 *Lucky Touch* track listings we received. As we sat down with the final totals, it was tough to say good-bye to some personal favorites. No "Souls of the Departed"? No "With Every Wish"? No "Big Muddy"? Okay, we might have predicted the latter, at least, but we were still rooting for all of these. That's the tough part of being asked to rule out 12 Springsteen songs. As readers mentioned over and over again, a "bad" Bruce song is better than many other artists' best.

When it came down to it, every song got some love from a significant number of fans. Every song from the two albums received at least one vote. In fact, every song received at least 107 votes—that's how many "Real Man" got. For as much "worst-song-ever" dissing as "Real Man" has suffered, it still found its way on to more than seven percent of the lists.

The top 12 represents the songs that the most people felt *had* to go on the record. The top four, in particular—"Better Days," "Lucky Town," "Human Touch," and "If I Should Fall Behind" each made it to at least 90% of the lists we received. Every song on our final *Lucky Touch* line-up was on at least half of the lists (but just barely—"Man's Job" was picked by 50.66% of our readers). This does point out the problem with making a record by committee—there are some gems further on down that just weren't must-haves for as many fans. But that's sorta the point of this whole exercise, right?

It's interesting to note that the eight songs chosen most often in the poll were by-and-large the "happy songs." Springsteen told the crowd in his 1998 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction speech, "I tried [writing just 'happy songs'] in the early '90s, and it didn't work. The public didn't like it!" From our poll-toppers, you wouldn't know it.

There was so much good stuff, and so much bad, spread over the two, it cries out for this!
—NICK HAWTHORNE

SLOT MACHINES

Once we had our top 12, the challenge was to come up with a sequence. In keeping with the spirit of a poll, we set out to let reader picks determine the song order as best we could. Since there turned out to be quite a bit of consensus among readers on what should go where— and thanks to the efforts of Paul Chernoff, who compiled the data for us—this was far easier than we thought.

"Better Days" received the most votes to open side one; "Human Touch," the most votes to open side two. "Living Proof" and "My Beautiful Reward" were the top picks for the penultimate and closing tracks, respectively. ("My Beautiful Reward" was by far the top pick for album-closer, with 577 votes for that slot, more than doubling the slot-12 votes for the runner-up, "If I Should Fall Behind.") So for the important positions, there was actually consensus. Which surprised the hell out of us.

Not every slot in between fell quite as nicely into place, but we came up with the best sequence we could based on both reader picks and on what made the best narrative sense.

In fact, check out the first three songs and their order. Notice anything? Yep, it's the same way that the official *Lucky Town* LP kicks off, and that was simply by the numbers—each of those songs was the top reader pick for its respective position. Not that everyone mimicked the *Lucky Town* sequence—1,325 people tapped "Better Days," while almost 400 fewer picked "Local Hero." But those songs won their slots, right where Springsteen put them, by getting more votes for that position than any other song in the poll.

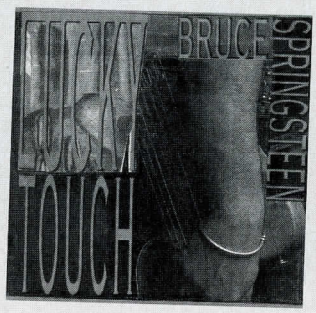
The remainder of side one comes from *Human Touch*, making it evenly split between *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*. (We decided from the beginning to split the album into two sides, even in the age of CDs, mainly for the additional thematic considerations—to have two side-openers and two side-closers. And because we like records.) Side two is *LT*-heavy, tipping the balance toward that fan-favorite of the two LPs, but the total tally is surprisingly close, with five songs from *Human Touch* and seven from *Lucky Town*.

Our B-sides: "57 Channels," and "Souls of the Departed." "57 Channels" just missed *Lucky Touch*, at #13 in the tally of total votes, *and* it was the song picked the most often as a B-side (239 B-side votes), so that was a no-brainer. The other B-side is a tough call: "Pony Boy" received the next-highest number of votes for the B-side position (162). But "Souls of the Departed," picked by 112 people as a B-side, came in at #14 on the total-votes list. "Pony Boy," on the other hand, clocked in just above "Real Man" on the total-votes list, so we're going with "Souls of the Departed." But for everybody who said they put their kids to bed with "Pony Boy"—and from the sound of it, there are going to be a *lot* of up-and-coming fans with very fond memories of that song—feel free to make your own call on that one.

You can count the number of great rock double albums on one hand. But let us not forget, this was not a double album. These two records were independently written, recorded, produced, and mixed. The only thing they really share is a release date. "I Wish I Were Blind" is about the only song from *Human Touch* that sounds like it could have been on *Lucky Town*. Marc Scheer writes, "I think one of the greatest misconceptions is that these albums can be combined. I don't think they are meant to be. With *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, we don't have a double album, we have two half-finished ones." And this from Steve Malawski: "My recommendation would be to re-record the *Human Touch* songs in the style of *Lucky Town*... in other words, more stripped down. This would make for an easier package (and might make the *Human Touch* songs more palatable)."

Hey, while we're at it, let's add a few songs from *Tracks*, have them all recorded with the E Street Band, and produced by... well, that's another poll.

—Andrew E. Massimino and Christopher Phillips
Number-crunching by Paul Chernoff



***Slice-and-dice:** Larry Kabat's homemade* Lucky Touch *sleeve.*

BREAKIN' THE RULES

We tried to keep the task simple, by putting only* HT *and* LT *songs up for consideration, but some readers picked songs from* Tracks *and beyond. The top songs picked by readers who colored outside the lines:

30 Days Out	73
Happy	58
Sad Eyes	52
Part Man, Part Monkey	41
Trouble River	40
Seven Angels	31
Leavin' Train	20
Loose Change	18
Red Headed Woman	15
When the Lights Go Out	14
Trouble in Paradise	11

Lucky Town is barely an album. It's ten songs Bruce recorded in a few weeks in 1991 that he for some inexplicable reason considered an album. If he'd been willing to release LPs by that standard all along, he'd have released twice as many albums as he has by now. —WILFRED MAJOR

Pulling these albums out of the rack and looking at long-forgotten titles only reiterates what a low point they were, the absolute hindquarters of his career.
—THOMAS PEELE

It's strange how these albums garner little respect amongst long time fans. To me, they're just an extention of the themes he went after on Tunnel of Love, *which some could argue is his best. —CHAD HUCAL*


GUITAR
MAN

THE NILS LOFGREN INTERVIEW

When Nils Lofgren joined the E Street Band in 1984, he had big shoes to fill. Miami Steve had departed to devote his attention to a solo career as Little Steven. No one could replace the personality, but Lofgren had an intuitive ear and skills as a guitar player that jelled quickly with Springsteen's sound.

If Nils Lofgren embodies just one characteristic of the E Street Band, it's preparedness. Lofgren still spends a great deal of time and energy getting ready not only for a tour, but also for each evening's performance. How do you get from Neil Young to Bruce Springsteen and back? And back again? In a word, *practice.*

The guitarist also carved his own niche as a singer, songwriter, and bandleader. Lofgren turned professional in 1968, playing in bands like the Dolphin and joining Neil Young's band at the age of 17. You'd need four hands to count the number of records to his name, beginning with his band, Grin, in 1971, and as a solo artist from 1975 on. But good luck finding many of them: labels still own the rights, and many decline to put them back in print. Today, he releases his new music himself, unencumbered by the rigamarole of the music business.

In his first *Backstreets* interview since 1985, Lofgren talked about his relationship with Springsteen, the second coming of the E Street Band, and of course, practice, practice, practice. He also graciously answered questions *Backstreets* solicited from readers through the magazine's website. All this, and guitar-flip belly-flops too, in a conversation with the versatile musician that lasted even longer than a Springsteen concert.

Let's start with a basic *Backstreets* question. When did you first meet Bruce Springsteen?

In 1970, we were both participating in an audition night at Bill Graham's Fillmore West. Bruce was in a group called Steel Mill, I had my band Grin, and we were two of probably 30 acts that night, playing 20 minutes each in hopes of getting an opening slot at the Fillmore West. I'm kind of hazy after that—I know that I traveled on the same circuit in the Northeast, and I later wound up recording in a lot of the same studios in New York and L.A.—but that was my first exposure to Bruce, and it was very early on that I became a fan.

Steel Mill and Grin were touring at the same time and certainly had some crossover as far as your itineraries.

I was bumping into him in studios and on the same circuit, especially the colleges. I remember being at colleges in the Carolinas, and the kids would say, "Oh, Bruce is playing across campus," and not being able to catch the show because I had my own thing. I was always, as best as I could be, totally immersed in trying to serve as a fledgling professional rock musician. I tried to keep an eye on Bruce and his music, and the next real memory I have of it is in the mid-'70s, after a run of Bruce's at the Bottom Line. I actually went and saw the last night's performance of the E Street Band with Bruce, which was fabulous—and the day after that was my first gig as a solo artist.

It's funny now to see the ad from those Bottom Line shows, where it says, "August 13-17, Bruce Springsteen; August 18, Nils Lofgren."

Yeah, that was really a fun, kind of traumatic time for me. I really am a band person, but my band Grin had made four records with no commercial success, and we couldn't get a record deal. We did a farewell concert at the Kennedy Center and tried to go out with some class, and I, in a very fragile state, carried on as a solo artist. It was new to me, and that was my first show as a solo artist. I watched Bruce the night before, and they were so great that I left halfway through his show because I was so over-stimulated and concerned about my show the next night. I went to my hotel and practiced, did sit-ups, studied the set list, and just tried to prepare as best I could for my first show.

But those were standard growing pains. Especially after that, I was able to attend E Street Band concerts in the late '70s, which were always inspiring. By then his records were very national and easy to access, and I just remained a fan. The Sunset Marquis in L.A. was a local motel where we would cross paths while we were working in studios. Bruce was always kind; he let me come to the studio, listen to stuff he was doing, take drives up the coast and listen to music, and just talk. He was always someone who I had great respect for and admired—not only his talent, but his demeanor as a person and his professionalism.

So not only were you a fan of his and the E Street Band, but you and Bruce had a personal relationship from the early days?

Yeah, I mean it was a distant friendship, but whenever we found ourselves face-to-face it always seemed a very comfortable place to be, and I always got a lot out of it. And we just maintained that through the years. Bruce would come to some of my shows—I had my solo band at the Stone Pony, of course, and he would get up and play once in a while in the early '80s.

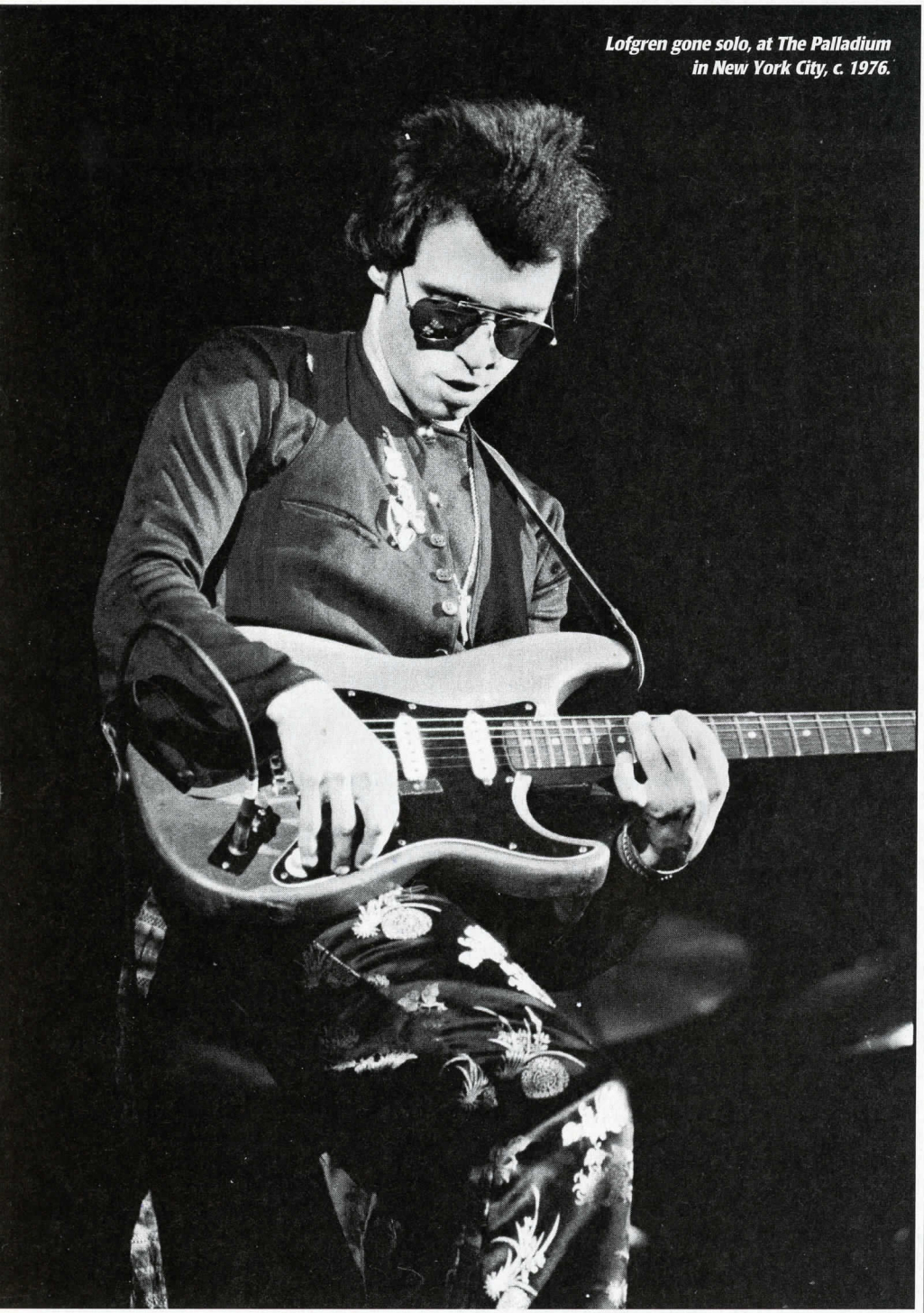
How much contact did you have leading up to the *Born in the U.S.A.* period and Steve leaving the band?

It was six or seven months prior to the release of *Born in the U.S.A.* that I'd gone up to Jersey to spend a weekend with Bruce, just hanging out. I was kind of down in the dumps—it was the end of '83, and that was the first time that I was actually out on the street without a record deal. I was starting to get referred to as a "dinosaur" by the companies, and it was a little bit of a scary time for me. I was talking to Bruce on the phone, and he could hear that I was down in the dumps, so he said, "Why don't you come up and hang out?" I did, and he just happened to have pretty much the finished product of *Born in the U.S.A.* We listened to it a lot, and I was amazed at what a great record it was. We jammed a lot in Jersey clubs and spent some time together; like I say, it was always a positive experience and inspiring to be around Bruce's music or just around him as a friend and a person. Fortunately, in May of '84 when he needed a guitarist, I got the first call, and we jammed for a couple of days with the band. It felt great—and most importantly, it felt great to Bruce and the band, and they asked me to become a member, which was a great honor and still is.

I wanted to ask you how that came about. Steve's departure was announced in May of 1984, and you officially joined the band the same month. But how long before that were those wheels in motion? When you were at his place listening to *Born in the U.S.A.*—did something happen at that point?

No, at that point MTV was announcing that there would be a replacement for Steven, and that was very premature. I could tell as I was watching MTV with Bruce that he was disappointed and upset with that, and that it wasn't accurate. I was still so wrapped up in my own thing, and in a kind of professional crisis, trying to find a record deal at the time, that I just took the opportunity—even though Bruce said there wasn't any truth to that at the time, and I don't believe either he or Steve had made any decisions yet—I just said, "Well, if you ever needed a guitarist, I would certainly want an audition." I think that was a little bit of a surprise, because Bruce had always known me as a solo artist, and solo artists are mostly comfortable playing their own music. In general, singers and songwriters don't thrive in a situation working in other groups. But obviously, Bruce made a mental note of that.

BY CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS



Lofgren gone solo, at The Palladium in New York City, c. 1976.

JAMES SHIVE PHOTO

It was about, I think, six months later that he and Steve finally—and this is from an outsider's point of view, I wasn't there, so I'm just speculating—as two, obviously very close friends, basically they were like brothers, they came to the uncomfortable decision that Steve needed to go do his own music. Which he's great at—and it builds up in you like bile, you've got to get it out. Steve went and made some great records, and he continues to make great music. Me, on the other hand, I had been getting it out since I was 16. At 17, I turned professional, and it's something I do all the time, so it's a different dynamic for me. Bruce remembered what I'd said and gave me the first shot when they started looking for a guitarist.

How did that happen, was it just a phone call? Was there an audition process?

Again, this is just from my perspective, I don't know what was going on up in New Jersey—I know that six months after that weekend visit, when Bruce and I went around and jammed with a lot of different local bands and just had fun, Bruce called me and said, "Why don't you come up, hang out, and we'll do some jamming with the band." Bruce is very low-key about things, and when he said "jam with the band," I knew that he wasn't going to put the E Street Band together just for fun to jam with me. I took that as meaning, "let's see how it feels with you playing with the band and me." And in my mind, I considered that, although Bruce may not have used the word *audition* in describing it to me, that's what it was. But it's just a word—it was like a tryout in some aspect to find out how I felt about it, and how they felt about it. Bruce is very pure and bottom-line about that stuff, and so am I. I'm like, hey, if I'm not the right guy, I shouldn't be in any situation… whether it's Bruce or someone else, everyone deserves to have the right people playing with them.

So I took it very seriously. I was very excited, I recall staying up for a couple of nights straight putting together some rough chord charts of some of the songs that are mainstays in the catalog: "Badlands," "The Promised Land," "Born in the U.S.A."… That album hadn't actually even been released, but there was a local bootlegger, who was one of the admirable ones who doesn't sell stuff, they just trade and collect it. Even though CBS/Columbia kept the *Born in the U.S.A.* record incredibly well under wraps, somehow this friend of mine had gotten an advance copy. It was just a cassette, I don't know how the hell he got it, but he was kind enough to come over to my parents' house, where I was crashing because I was really almost out on the street. I was at a low point, and he sat there—he wouldn't let me keep it overnight—he sat there while I'd play it.

Of course, you'd heard much of it already.

I'd heard this thing a lot, up with Bruce six months prior, and I loved it. So I was familiar in that respect. But I sat there with a guitar and wrote out some rough chord charts. He was kind enough to give me the time to do that, and then he took the tape and left. When I got up to Jersey, we went to Big Man's West in Red Bank, which had closed prior to that, and we jammed for a few days. I'd met all the guys through the years—certainly I didn't know any of them as well as Bruce, but they're all friendly, they always had been.

So I had some rough chord charts, and instead of having to have Garry or somebody yell the chords in my ear, at least there was a body of songs that they could just play—and I could play along—and even though it was primitive with a lot of rough edges, get a feel of how it all went together. After two days of that, fortunately for me, Bruce and the band felt that it went together well enough to offer me the spot in the band, which, again, was a huge, huge honor.

The record came out on June 4, and then four days later you were at the Pony playing with these guys—your first public performance with the E Street Band. And the first show of the tour was at the end of the month.

Oh yeah, I got the job about four weeks from opening night, so there was no way I was going to assimilate the entire catalog in a month. I just did the best I could. There was a room in Bruce's home I moved into, and I just really banned all other music. I listened to Bruce's stuff day and night: studied it, made chord charts, went to bed with the boombox playing in my ear, woke up and pushed the button and started it again. I just immersed myself in the music.

The band was always friendly, and everyone made it clear, "If you have any questions at any time, knock on the door," which I did. But still, my forte is performing live, and it's totally based on being intimate with the music, shutting my mind off, and reacting to my musical instincts. That involves a preparation, through osmosis, of having a song ingrained in me to

where I just don't think about it at all. That's a function of time that I certainly didn't have, and Bruce and everyone understood that. I just did my best, and that was good enough. But it was about 20 shows into the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour before I walked out and kind of felt like I owned my parts and was very comfortable.

So being the new kid on the block, so to speak, was less of a concern than just getting to know the material well enough that it became second nature?

That's true, and it was also a personal thing. I mean, I knew that having 20 shows where I was thinking a lot didn't keep me from playing decent musical parts that helped the show. It was more a function of getting to a place where I could personally feel more comfortable. And in some small way as a band member, feeling more comfortable does translate into a greater whole that you present. Granted, it was not a big deal to the audience, and no one, I'm sure, noticed that except myself. But I think it was at the Meadowlands—I remember walking out the first night of that run, and I felt like I had reached a new level and certainly was able to enjoy the whole thing a lot more than the early shows in the tour.

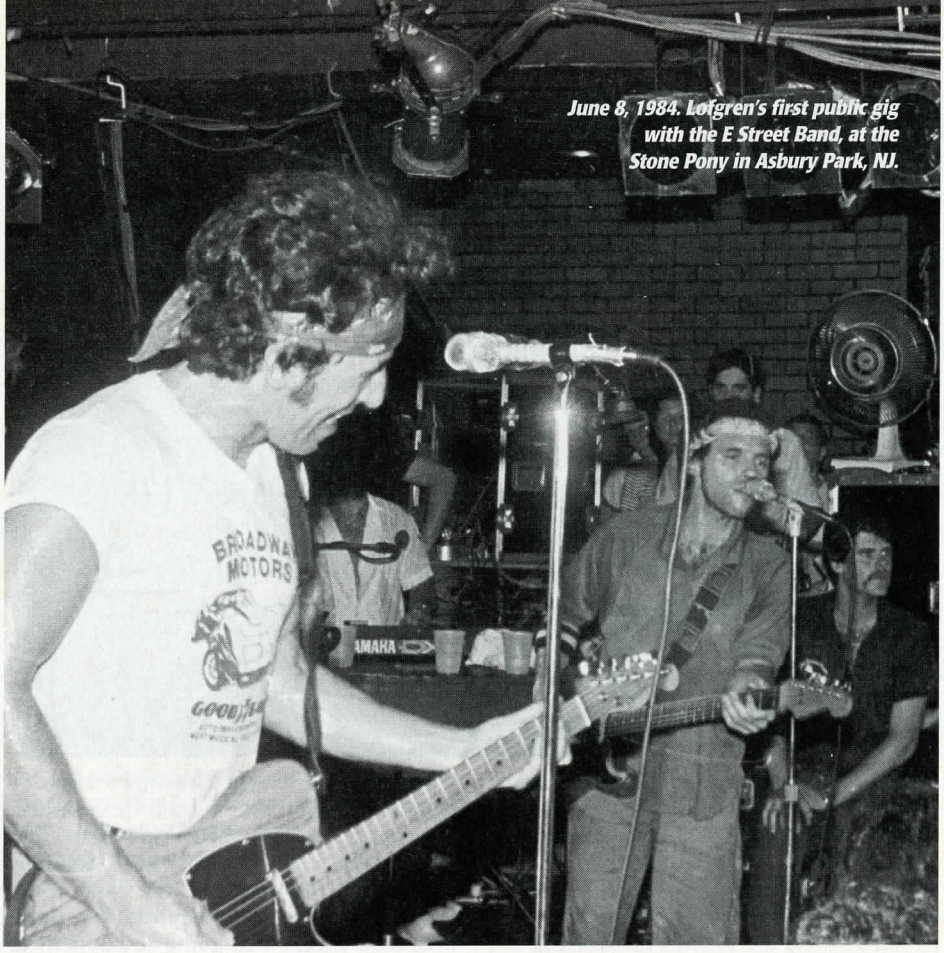
Yeah, I think the Meadowlands shows were just about 20 shows into it.

I think it was exactly 20, it was very close, and it wasn't planned, I just remember walking out and thinking, wow, I'm in a different place than I was. And I never had to go back to that place. That's a function of any new project, like writing a new song—you start from zero, and you have faith and confidence that if you put in the time and the work, something special will come of it. That's kind of a guarantee if you put in the work.

Were there any moments when you wondered how you would be embraced by fans who were seeing you up there for the first time?

No, at that point I'd been doing this for—that was '84, I turned professional in '68, so I was 16 years into it. I knew that my heart was in the right place and that I loved the music, and that's really the main requirement, I think, to be in a great band. It's not requiring a virtuoso performance. It's a two keyboard band, it's based on some amazing virtuoso playing from Roy and Danny, which is really the meat of it. It wasn't like there were any technical requirements I was worried about, it was just more a case of absorbing the music so much that I owned all the parts.

I did take for granted that there would be people who would miss the hell out of Steven, but I didn't worry about it. That's human nature. I love Steven and the work he did for that band. There are also some fans who are so fixated on Bruce and his songs that it's just a bump in the road. I knew I couldn't change anybody's mind, and I wasn't worried about it—I didn't expect everyone to embrace me. Not that I didn't care, but what I really cared about was the music. I was concerned about musically catching up and integrating myself musically into the group, so I just took for granted that at the end of the day it would be okay. And as always, I had faith that if Bruce thinks I'm supposed to be there, then it's going to be okay as long as I do my best. And it was.



June 8, 1984. Lofgren's first public gig with the E Street Band, at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park, NJ.

JAMES SHIVE PHOTO

ACROSS THE TRACKS

As far as I know, your first experience recording with Bruce in the studio was for the 1985 B-side, "Janey, Don't You Lose Heart."

Yeah, I don't know if we were in rehearsals or the early part of the tour, but Bruce said there was a B-side to his single and he wanted me to redo a harmony. I went into New York City and that was my first technical appearance on a [Springsteen] record. I'm singing the harmony on "Janey"—which I was happy made the *Tracks* box set. That's one of my favorite songs, the melody and the sentiment just really touch me.

Had you heard or known about the song before Bruce asked you to contribute vocals?

I had not. I was so immersed in the preparation, the rehearsals and the early part of the tour, it was just something that happened out of the blue, and it was great. I wound up being in New York City and got to sing a harmony on a song I loved.

Originally Steve sang the harmony, and then your voice replaced his, is that right?

I don't know—I know there was an existing harmony that Bruce had sung, and at the end there too, with me. I walked into the studio, they put up this tape, Bruce kind of showed me where the harmony was, I went out and sang it, and then I left. So what was there before, after, added, changed… all I knew was that when it was done, I was in there singing—and it sounds like maybe Bruce is in the background, that's how it sounds to me. I don't know what state it was in before that.

The next recording experience was really on the road, when we did a couple of Woody Guthrie songs for a Woody Guthrie tribute record. Bruce contributed two songs and, if I recall, we were literally on stage at some gig when Bruce presented us with the idea of the songs. I believe it was at a soundcheck, there was a remote truck or something—I was playing a slide guitar and a 12-string, and we did a couple of songs that did appear on that tribute record.

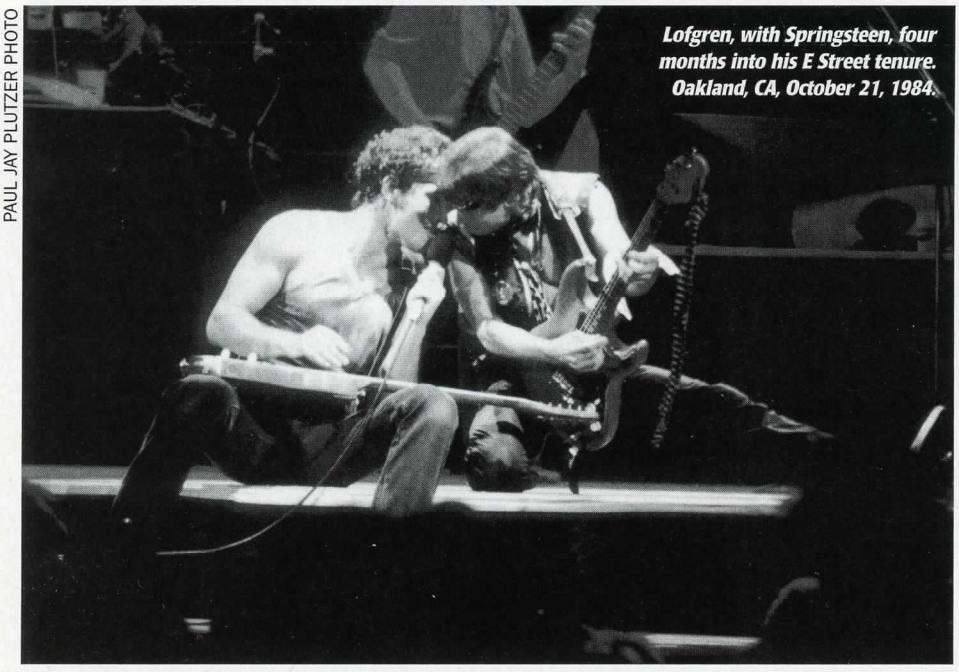
Sure, the *Folkways: A Vision Shared* record—and that was the first time you actually recorded with the band?

Yes, that was recording with the band, but it wasn't Bruce Springsteen material.

And before that there were the *Tunnel of Love* sessions which, of course, involved Springsteen material but not full-band recordings. I've been curious to know how that worked—when you played that amazing solo on "Tunnel of Love," was that like "Janey," the kind of thing where you just went into the studio with the track already done and you just added your solo? How did that happen?

It was mostly done, basically I had gone up to—I can't remember the circumstances, I know I was headed to Bruce's home in Jersey for a brief visit for a day or two, and he was in the middle of recording a solo record, *Tunnel of Love.* And because Bruce was very open about it, I was looking forward to hearing some new Bruce music. He was very low-key about things; he mentioned there was a track he might want me to try to play a lead on, and I said, "great."

It was in a house on his property at the time. He had a little carriage house where a studio was set up, and he was basically working on it on his own with his engineer. I went over, we messed around with guitar



PAUL JAY PLUTZER PHOTO

Lofgren, with Springsteen, four months into his E Street tenure. Oakland, CA, October 21, 1984.

and amp sounds, and I took a poke at the solo. After a few hours in the afternoon we got something that, at the time, seemed appropriate, and fortunately it made the record—which is a great thrill for me, because Bruce is an amazing guitarist on his own, he certainly doesn't need any other guitar players on his records. So it was cool to have that opportunity and to have it work out.

And the other place you show up on that record is on "When You're Alone," singing those harmonies.

Yeah, Patti and I went in one day and just sang some harmonies, again, it was very low-key. He brought different members of the band in here and there to add some different touches to that record, which was cool. It was kind of unexpected, and I was grateful for the opportunity to participate in what is certainly a great solo record of his.

Anything else that you did for that record that didn't make it on there that you recall?

No, those were the two things that Bruce had in mind for me to participate in, and they both made the record. It was very brief, a couple of days, a couple of brief sessions, and that was it for that record. Of course, we wound up touring with it eventually, and that was exciting: to get into the entire record and learn all the other parts and present that record on the *Tunnel of Love* tour, which was a cool tour.

CODE OF THE ROAD

How was that tour, for you, different than the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour?

Certainly being more comfortable because I was no longer a rookie—I had 156-some-odd shows under my belt with the band, and that's the best place to learn with any band, on stage in front of an audience. So I started at rehearsal with some more confidence. But other than that it was just, hey: great band, great bandleader, great songs, and plenty of time and all the wonderful staff, help, equipment, that comes with that kind of success to put on a really special show.

And you certainly had more time to prepare than you did the first time around. How much advance notice was there? The record came out in October 1987, the tour wasn't until February. Was the band aware that a tour was going to happen? Was Bruce even sure a tour was going to happen for *Tunnel of Love?*

Let's see, that tour started in '88. And I think October— I can't quote you dates, but somewhere in the fall of '87, we went up to Jersey for a series of weekends where we'd get together and just jam with Bruce. It was just kind of an exploratory gathering for Bruce to bounce around ideas and just see how he felt about it. And I think after three weekends of that, we all went home. I'm not really sure how close to Christmas, or before Christmas, or November... somewhere after that exploratory series of rehearsals or jams, Bruce decided to do the *Tunnel of Love* tour. So we knew about it before the end of the year and of course started making appropriate plans to head into rehearsals early in '88. It was just a natural, thorough, family-based approach of finding how to move forward with the band.

As far as getting the band familiar with the new material, what was that process like?

That's the advantage of having the time to prepare, having the freedom to take enough time to prepare the show and get to a point where it sounds like you've done 20 shows. At that point there were a lot of different choruses and delay sounds on the *Tunnel of Love* record that I needed to present, so I moved from old Fender amps—I used two super-reverbs run together, two 4x10s—I finally moved over to a Mesa Boogie amp, which was a lot more powerful. It took me a long time to figure out how those amps worked, I was using a Mark III and they're very complicated—at least to me they were. And then I also got a Roland GP-8 effects rack, which I'd never done before, which was a huge step.

I was staying with a good friend in Rumson—John Mulheren and his wife Nancy were kind enough to put me up in a house on their property, the River Barn. I could have stayed in the hotel with the band, but this was a little more homey. I had my rental car, and I knew my way around the area, because I'd spent a lot of time up there anyway.

This is during the rehearsals?

During the *Tunnel of Love* tour rehearsals, which probably lasted six or eight weeks. You know, we worked hard every day, but we didn't kill ourselves. We paced ourselves, and very methodically we would address one of countless issues—from the technical side to the musical side to the production side to everything that goes with presenting a tour at that level.

And it was exciting, because once I found the amp that I wanted to upgrade to, I had this great road crew that would get the amps in and set them up—I just walked in and played with them. It was just very exciting as a musician. I'm happy to be a bandleader, but when you walk offstage, your job never ends. To not be the leader allowed me a musical focus which was very exciting to embrace, to just take advantage of all the tools.

Also, once I found this GP-8 effects rack, I had it brought to the River Barn. They brought it over, set up a spare amp and an effects rack, and I could, at a very quiet level, with a little boombox and the rehearsal tapes, sit there and very quietly, slowly, and methodically mess with the sounds, mess with the programming. I'd kind of tweak them day-to-day, week-to-week, and keep honing in on the vision of the sound I needed to have.

Something that was also a huge help, which was an idea of Bruce's: he had the engineers go in and tape the songs from *Tunnel of Love* and make mixes of them that featured the guitar parts. In other words, it was just like when you're a kid and you sit and learn a guitar part off a record. But any time you have a part that fits inside of 30 other parts, there's almost no way you're going to hear exactly what's going on. Notes bleed into each other, there are overtones, there are similar frequencies, and it all gets to be just one big sound. If you take that sound and isolate it, say, as loud as a lead vocal, and put it to the left channel or something, you'd be surprised how different the part really is from what your ear hears in the stereo mix.

So this was a fabulous tool that I had—these tapes, which were certainly just for that purpose only, they weren't for listening to the song. I was able to isolate specifically the sounds I was recreating, and that made it much easier to sit there alone and work on these effects, to just play with them and tweak them to get them as close as I could.

And also, Bruce, like any great band leader, wants everything to feel right: he doesn't care if it's the exact guitar and you play it the exact way he did, he just wants it to feel right. I have a little bit of a different style, but I understand the song, and it was just a very user-friendly environment to come up with the parts for the *Tunnel of Love* tour.

Springsteen really, decidedly, shook some things up on that tour as far as not only bringing in the horns, but changing band members' sides, and even the sort of thematic aspects, the ticket booth and all that. Was a lot of that developed in rehearsals? How much of that was presented by Bruce, and how much of it was the group piecing the whole thing together?

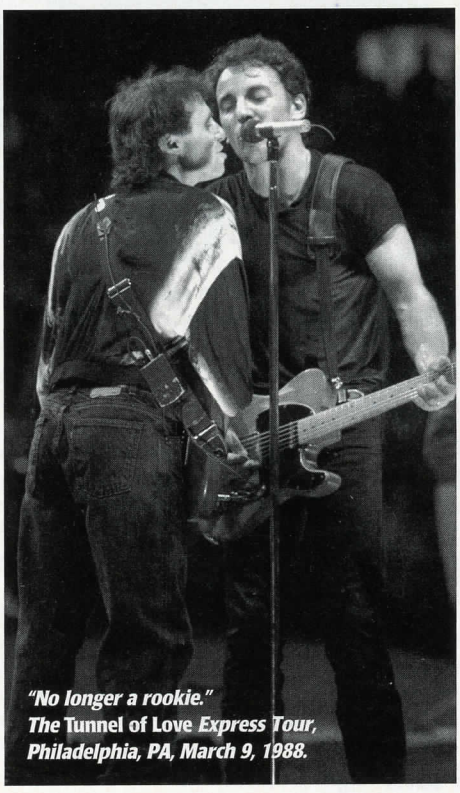
I think that the way we all walked up and the ticket booth, that was Bruce's idea—we did that in rehearsal, we all loved it, it was fine. I forget at what point in rehearsals Bruce came up with that idea, but certainly it was closer to production, where we actually had the stage. You know, you move from the club environment into the production rehearsals—we had some airplane hangar where we were rehearsing in Jersey where we actually had the stage—you start finalizing things and experimenting on a grander production scale.

But it was all kind of just a natural part of the process. I mean, Bruce is the leader, and everyone in the band throws out ideas, and, of course, Bruce takes them and digests them. The standard kind of benevolent dictatorship of a band. You know, you've got to have a leader. And the best bands, like this one, have people who have a lot of strong, good ideas. They don't always necessarily fit, but Bruce is respectful and appreciative of having ideas on the table, and everyone's got a healthy attitude and ego when it comes to Bruce picking what's best for the vision he wants to present. At the end of the day, you can't argue with success. You can go to a show and see, when Bruce walks out there and is comfortable, there's no better band and bandleader out there doing it. So everyone knows their place and is comfortable participating in the whole thing, trusting Bruce to make the final edits to make it right.

That being said, do you think the band feels comfortable presenting ideas? Can you request a song to play on the tour, that kind of thing?

Yeah, everyone knows Bruce is open to any ideas; everyone knows Bruce will do what he thinks is best, and no one takes it personally. We're always lobbying for songs we want to hear, but it's in a spirited good nature. Sometimes a request will work and sometimes it won't, and that's just like with any singer.

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO



"No longer a rookie."
The **Tunnel of Love** *Express Tour,*
Philadelphia, PA, March 9, 1988.

What about you, do you have favorite songs that you lobby for, or that you'd like to do that you haven't done on stage? I know "Man at the Top" has always been one of your favorites.

"Man at the Top" I love, which we only did a couple of times on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. One of my favorites is "Wreck on the Highway," which I did a cover of. I think we only did that once on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. This last tour I lobbied unsuccessfully, occasionally, for the electric version of "Born in the U.S.A." Bruce does a fabulous, haunting version alone, and that's what he wanted to present. I totally get it—I go out with my band, and people say you've got to play this song, and I say I just don't feel emotionally attached to that. If you don't, you don't, and I totally get it.

In Barcelona you guys did try a full-band "Born in the U.S.A."—sort of an amalgam, I guess, with a more modern vocal. Do you recall that, playing that full-band version?

No.

The second night of the tour, I think—it was the only time on the last tour that Bruce tried something different with that song besides just coming out alone.

Yeah, but it wasn't the *Born in the U.S.A.* version. To me, that's what I'm pushing for: the full-out, rip-your-head off, screaming bloody murder… And you know, that's just apples and oranges. What Bruce did was haunting and beautiful, and that's why he did it that way. I mean, that to me is such a powerful song no matter how you do it. But hey, I love great music, so selfishly, I want to be out there ripping your face off while Bruce is singing it.

I used to just sneak back in the dark—I usually wouldn't leave the stage, just to keep my focus—I'd just go sit behind Max's riser in the dark and just listen to Bruce. I'd find a sight line to kind of watch him through the holes and just enjoy him doing that, sit there in the dark in peace and just catch my breath for the next bit.

That's a great image. And now that we're talking about the 1999-2000 tour, what other requests come to mind?

I knew all along I wanted to do "Jersey Girl," and we did get to hear that. When we got back to the States, we did the 15 nights in the Meadowlands and I remember Patti and I were lobbying heavy for "Jersey Girl"—successfully. We got that in there.

One song that was on my list was "Ramrod," that eventually came along and got played a lot. "Janey, Don't You Lose Heart" we hit a few times. We did over 100 songs on that tour, so we did get to do a lot of great stuff.

And, you know, in that many shows you never played a set list that was the same.

No, we didn't, and I'm not an aficionado, but I think there was less than a half-dozen nights that we actually followed the set list top to bottom. Which doesn't surprise me, but still, that's kind of a cool thing about Bruce and the E Street Band.

We played so many good songs, I can't think of anything that really jumps out other than the electric version of "Born in the U.S.A." Another song that we did wind up playing was "Back in Your Arms." There were so many good songs on *Tracks,* and we did get to a lot of them, but that was one—I mean, I didn't lobby hard for it, but when Bruce pulled it out, I thought "Oh yeah, man, this is *great.*"

Those are the ones that come to mind as songs that I really wanted to hear, and most them I did. It's just a very natural thing to happen: it's like you have eight or nine guys sitting around with a cable TV; which sports game are you going to watch? Each guy has different tastes, and the guy who owns the house picks the one he wants, and it's fine with everybody.

And when it comes down to it, Bruce is holding the remote.

Of course, like any bandleader.

BACK IT UP

How did some of those rarer songs creep into the set? Like, did you ever imagine playing songs like "New York City Serenade," or "Incident," or "Saint in the City"? Were those ever surprises to the band? Or band requests?

In general, at soundchecks Bruce might mention four, five, six songs as "possibles." We might brush over some of them, or the ones we didn't touch on we would just go learn. Some of them may appear in a set, none of them, all of them… you never really knew. And then there would always be an oddball or two that wasn't discussed, just a surprise that he'd spring on us. It was kind of a controlled improv situation, which keeps the band—and the audience, and the bandleader—on a healthy edge.

I mean, yeah, people would lobby for songs: Max—all of us—would throw out songs, and I can't remember which ones were borne of requests, but any song that Bruce wrote wasn't a surprise to wind up playing. If he called an oddball in the middle of a show—I remember one night he called out "Bus Stop." And we hadn't played it in like 13 years or something, and we didn't talk about it, and we didn't rehearse it. He just walked up and counted it off, and that was fun. Bruce knows what's going on, we're all looking at each other like, "are we going to blow this or not?" And it's at that point you just trust your instincts and go for it.

Is there any way to really prepare for that?

Something I used to do… This was just for me to keep calm and enjoy the process as much as possible, because this was an amazing opportunity for me. Generally, my way of life is to be the bandleader, not having this kind of freedom. I rehearse for two *days,* not for two months. I go into bars where every night there's a PA, and it's usually not very good. So this is a situation for me to shine in—to soak up and love, to have my family along, and I wanted to enjoy it as much as possible.

So one of the things that I would do, like when we were in Jersey doing 15 shows at the Meadowlands, I rented a house in Sea Bright. My wife Amy, our son Dylan and I, we spent the whole summer there. I would drive myself to the shows, usually, rather than get a ride—which is available to me; I mean, having spaced-out musicians drive isn't always the best idea. And when you're doing a run in one place, 15 nights, obviously you're going to want to pull out more songs. So I would start sampling a tape, some CDs… I'd just make a home tape, and I'd just guess:

okay, now what would be the next 15 songs that Bruce might pick? And I would just throw them on a tape and listen to them. Not worrying about studying them or owning them, but just listening to them, having the music in the car. So that if eight days later Bruce called out one of them—even though yes, I'd go and get the tape and organize a chord chart and get a little more serious about studying it—it wasn't such a foreign idea to me. I already kind of had that thing in my head, the melody and what happens here and how the bridge hits. It just made it an easier process to deal with the kind of living-on-the-edge song selection that is an inherent and important part of what Bruce and the E Street Band do.

It was just my way of enjoying the thing, and kind of like a guessing game. A lot of times I guessed pretty well, and it cut down on my homework time between the soundcheck and the gig. It allowed me to maybe play the pedal steel a little more, take care of that cousin who lost her ticket, or maybe spend ten minutes with my wife and son that I wouldn't normally get.

And then there were nights that I was just madly running up and down the hall, going from Bruce's room to the other guys', checking on changes and songs and things that were curve balls at the last minute that Bruce wanted to incorporate that night—and that was fun, too.

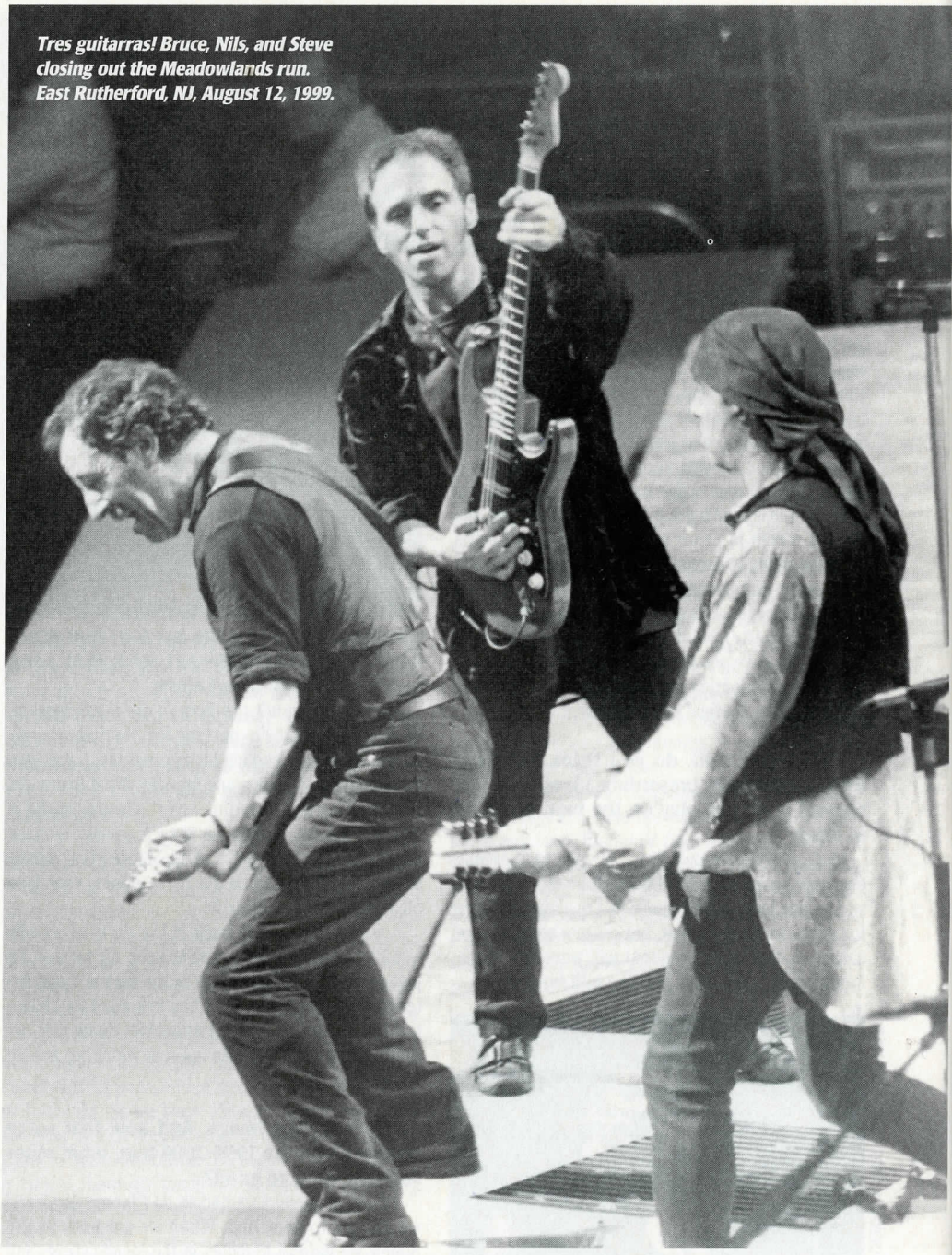
You mention the pedal steel—you learned the instrument just for that tour, didn't you?

Yeah. It's funny, I had just come from my eye doctor, to get my eyes checked. I was standing outside of his office, getting ready to go to rehearsals for that tour, thrilled that we were getting back together. Bruce called on my cell phone, outside the office. I was in the street, and Bruce was telling Steven and me that he wanted some pedal steel potentially in some numbers—he had a vague recollection that either Steven or I played pedal steel. And unfortunately, both of us had to tell Bruce we didn't.

I started working on simulating these pedal steel parts on "Brothers Under the Bridge" and stuff like that, with just my normal fade on the volume thing and bending the strings. But after messing around in my basement studio for a couple of days with this concept, it fell so far short of the real thing that I just thought, well, what the hell, why don't I take a crash course in pedal steel, rent one for rehearsals, and see what happens if I put some time into it. Because we initially got together for ten days, the last couple of days realizing that simulating pedal steel didn't cut it.

So the crew rented me a pedal steel from New York. Mark Mueller is the great guitarist and pedal steel player for Shania Twain; Kevin Buell, who's Bruce's guitar tech, had done their tour and he was kind enough to track Mark down. Mark was kind enough to come down, and the last two days after rehearsals at Fort Monmouth, he gave me literally a 45-minute crash course in pedal steel—one day it was like half an hour, another day it was 20 minutes.

I took that initial lesson, if you will, and Larry Cragg, who is Neil Young's guitar tech and played on tours with me and is a great friend, he found an old, secondhand pedal steel. I bought it, shipped it to my home in Maryland, and we had maybe a week off before we started into rehearsals again. So I sat down with what I knew and started trying to learn pedal steel to see if it was going to be worth it or not.



Tres guitarras! Bruce, Nils, and Steve closing out the Meadowlands run. East Rutherford, NJ, August 12, 1999.

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

When we got back into rehearsals, even though I was very clunky and primitive, it sounded to Bruce and to me like if I stuck with it, I might be able to do some simple parts to enhance the tunes. So I stuck with it.

It's pretty amazing that you were able to pull that off. Did that consume a lot of energy as the tour went on? Were you showing up early for soundcheck and that kind of thing?

Yeah, but I go early anyway. I took a couple of extended lessons from Mike Aldridge, who is a local musician here in Maryland and known as one of the greatest Dobro players in the world. He's also an excellent pedal steel player, and he put a couple hour-and-a-half lessons on tape. So I had these cassettes I'd take around on tour. Every day off I'd take the pedal steel to the hotel, set it up with the boombox and practice another lick.

For soundcheck, I like to go early anyway, because I find that the adrenaline gets to be so overwhelming in my body when I go over at four o'clock with the band, that sometimes I'm uncomfortable. So in general I would go over at about two in the afternoon, and I would have a chance to really have the whole place to myself. One of the beauties of a tour like that, there's a lot of great people out there—my wife Amy would get to come out a lot, even my son, Dylan, would be there. So this was a time for me to be alone.

This is why I like to eat early. I don't like to eat at dinner time, I like to be empty when I sing. I have an early dinner, three o'clock, I'd be alone in my dressing room with my wardrobe trunk. I could just focus on that night and get things out of the way. My pedal steel backup was set up—one on stage and one in the dressing room—so I got to sit there alone, mainly with the pedal steel, and I'd put in a half-hour or

an hour every day. I'd look in my notebook of chord charts or the next possible batch of songs Bruce may spring on us, just doing my own prep work. So when Bruce and the band showed up, if there were a lot of surprises and unexpected things, I had done enough of what I needed to do for myself by that time that I was able to keep the adrenaline in check and walk out on stage and feel pretty calm—or excited in a good way.

How did the band handle divvying up the guitar parts? Integrating Steve back into the band and having that many guitars on stage, in a way it was a new band. How difficult was it to work all that out?

Yeah, it was a new band, but all the players were alumni of the band, and the one overriding requirement we all had was a love of the music. It was very simple and natural. When I moved into the band, the obvious thing was, well, what was Steve doing? Because obviously, that's the guy that I replaced, and I started there. And when we were all back in the band, both Steve and I, there's just a natural, simple way to look at things. Every song that was recorded usually had three to five guitar parts. There's usually only one or two you notice, but as a musician I notice all of them. For instance, "Badlands": when Steve wasn't there for those years, I played the Strat, played the second rhythm and sang the harmony. With Steve back there, I don't need to sing the harmony; Steve picked up a Strat, he's going to play the part that's on the record; so those are the two most important parts covered. On that particular song, because it's electric, I just sort of doubled what was a very strong rhythm on the Strat, maybe exchanging some rhythmic kicks with Max a little bit. On a lot of the other songs, because I love acoustic rhythm, any time I could I'd pick up an acoustic and kind of become a giant shaker—get my right side of my body and try to crawl inside Max's high hat, like a giant shaker—never playing lines through chords, like the little lines that Steve would play or Bruce would play through the chords. I would just try to be like a meat-and-potatoes shaker with the chords, like something that's sticking between Garry and Max, but with some chordal texture, and I loved that. So basically, you look at the guys who made the record, and you pick the next most important part that you think will add.

So in a lot of ways it sounds like it freed you up.

Yeah, it freed me up, it was great. It's funny, it's the Keith Richards syndrome. It's one of the joys of this gig, like you always see Keith doing it—as a bandleader, I can't turn my back on the audience and forget to sing words and get lost in the high hat and the drum pattern. But I can do that in Bruce's band, and I'm not shirking my job.

And the same with Steve. If there was something from *Tunnel of Love* or that period, same thing: he just looked at what Bruce and I were doing, he's got great instincts—"okay, what's the next most important part I hear?"—and he'd pick up that guitar and go. Once in a while we'd be like, "Do you want to do the 12-string part?" "No, actually, I'd rather you do it, I've got this other part on the mandolin." "Cool." So it was just a very user-friendly kind of natural progression. Of course, once in a while Bruce would be like, you know, "Maybe go back to the electric on this one," but it was very easy to do.

Did it take some getting used to, having Steve on stage?

No, no, it was fabulous. I mean, Steve came out and played with us on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour what must have been a dozen times. For me, it was fabulous. I love singing, but I don't have a rough voice. I love singing "Prove It All Night," but I'd rather hear Steve sing it, because it's more like what I know.

I went to see the E Street Band all through the '70s and '80s, and they were very powerful. I saw them in little clubs, I saw them at the Roxy in L.A. (I opened that club with Neil Young on the *Tonight's the Night* Tour in '73). I saw them in sports arenas, I saw them at the Bottom Line. Yeah, as someone who loves to play, I'm happy to step up and make it work, but the band is more powerful with both of us in there, and it was a very healthy, positive environment.

As Bruce said when the tour was over, we've now completed the work of recreating the band. To a man, we all thought that was the best tour we'd ever done, and a lot of it was the function of just a few extra tools: the mandolin, the pedal steel, the extra voices. Patti's an amazing singer who can be rough or gentle. I can do that, but I'm more gentle and in the middle or below. Steve's got that great, raunchy, rough voice along with Bruce. Bruce can sing anything anyway, he's got gentle, raunchy… he's got, like, ten different voices he can dial up like a dial on a machine. He's a great singer. So it was just a more powerful group of sounds and tools to work with, and Bruce is a master at painting different pictures for each song with the tools he's given.

It was just a very enjoyable, fascinating process to watch the band and the tour evolve through the length of it—I feel like any band, no matter how good you are, you get better when you play. But something that I think we all noticed was when we played in Spain, the opening night, even we were surprised, because it sounded like our 30th show. It did—I mean we were like, *geez!* Usually you've got to play 20 or 30 shows to get this kind of feeling going, and it was going the first night. So that was a great, great sign and we just went on from there.



The "Youngstown" solo, which, of course, is such a huge highlight from the last tour, certainly evolved as it went along, too. Can you walk us through the steps of creating that solo?

Here's how that played out. That song, first of all, represented everything great about the latest configuration of the band—just more tools: you've got the raunchy feedback guitar of Bruce's, you've got Danny's accordion, you've got the mandolin from Steve, and you've got me on electric.

But initially, the solo was half that long. It's quite a long solo to end the song, and I did improv every night in Europe. It all went well, but we did 36 shows there, and I noticed once the shows got into the 30s, late 20s, I was feeling like, okay, we know the song, it works every night, but as an improv, some nights I just wasn't as happy about what I was doing as others. It was too inconsistent, and this started to bother me.

When we got the States, it became kind of a turning point in the show. You know, it was one of things where people said, "Wow, Nils, that solo was so cool!"—and I was like, "Yeah, I didn't think I was that good tonight." So I realized that I wanted something a little more consistent for myself. When we pulled into Washington, D.C.—well, this is kind of like my hometown. I spent eight years in Chicago, and I moved here in '59 when I was eight years old, so first of all, it was fun to drive to work. I drove to the MCI Center, I got to stay in my own home, and I've got a little basement studio. On the day off, I ran down to my basement, I threw down the chord progression, and I started jamming just the solo part with my Strat in my basement. I was just going off, having fun, and recording it all. Afterward, if I'd play a minute or two and there were some moments that I thought were special, I'd save that track and get another track. Then I'd do the same thing until I had two or three tracks that had some special moments. Front to back they weren't special every step of the way, but they had special moments that were totally off-the-top-of-my head improv. This is like tricking myself as a producer.

So then I went back in, I flagged the parts that I thought were special and dumped them onto a boombox so I wouldn't forget them, because I don't have that kind of memory, and basically I started assembling a theme. "Okay, this part is good here, this is good here…" and in my basement I worked out a basic map. I could go off from the path, but at least the path was there; if I went off and it started getting weird, I had the path to fall back on.

Having the freedom of a melody to fall back on—it's like Bruce does that with his voice, we all do that with parts. Roy does it with the classic lines in "Jungleland," something like that. If Roy started off "Jungleland" and played something you never heard every night, it just wouldn't be the same—even if it was brilliant, it would not be the same. Yet he'll play the theme, and as a musician I'll notice he'll change a note here and there, he'll glide into this riff a little bit differently, but the audience gets a sense of something that is very familiar and powerful.

Even though the "Youngstown" solo was not familiar to them, I wanted it to feel that way. So in D.C. I put a map together that I could follow and veer off and come back to. And that made the solo much more consistent and powerful from my perspective for the rest of the tour.

That is interesting, I'd be curious now to hear a tape of that show and the show before and see the difference.

I think if you took like two or three random tapes in Europe, there would just be no similarities whatsoever. From any shows in America, even if you jumped months, you'd notice a similarity in pattern that would be like a basic format that I had to follow.

GOIN' BACK: THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Many of our readers are really big fans of your solo work and songwriting, and so a lot of the questions we got were from people who wanted to know what inspired a favorite song of yours, or the story behind it. I've got a few songs I'll throw at you. The first one is off *Crooked Line*. What inspired...

..."Shot at You"? (Mary Grimaldi, Northborough, MA)

Like a lot of my songs, all of the emotions that I write about are things that I've felt, but the characters, a lot of times, are fictional. I'd been talking to my manager Anson, just reminiscing about high school days and some chick that he really dug that he couldn't get. The conversation was kind of tongue-in-cheek with a bunch of older, crusty guys at the time. That's where I got the idea, and love is a universal theme, but this was from the perspective of a character that can't get the girl yet, but it just feels so right to the character that he feels like it's going to happen some day. Even though maybe, for all I know, the girl and everyone who knows them both knows it's out of the question. But this guy is so into it, he just knows he's going to get a shot at it, and he's singing with that confidence and hope.

..."Shine Silently"? (Matt Engel, Wilkes-Barre, PA)

"Shine Silently" was a song that I demo'd for the Bob Ezrin sessions, the album *Nils*. It was pretty much the song and melody you heard, but with more of a spiritual tone to it—not unlike what the ending has become in my live shows, where I go into my little preacher rap. But Bob Ezrin asked if I would co-write this song with Dick Wagner. We did some really hard, eight- or nine-hour, day-after-day co-writing sessions in New York City, on that and a couple of other songs Dick co-wrote with me—I mean, hard work. But Dick was great to work with, and we altered the lyric to be a little more the kind of universal person-to-person theme that it became. So the record itself was more of a three minute pop tune, if you will. Then as I performed it live, I kept sneaking in the more spiritual aspect of it, which was there originally, and the live version is just kind of a mish-mash of the two. So that was just a song that initially was more of a spiritual message, that got turned into more of a love song, and then I integrated the original back into it for my live shows.

..."Night Fades Away"? (Prakash Gandhi, Orlando, FL)

Back then, this was still in my mostly bachelor days, spending a lot of nights bar-hopping, maybe drinking a little too much, and constantly looking for places to jam. Basically, I was a night owl. And I just took the opportunity to reminisce about all the changes you go through. I'd be in a crowded room, I'd be hitting on strangers to let me play, sometimes I'd be a pain in the ass. Then I'd be alone in the car listening to music, then I'd be alone in my motel room in L.A., really on my own and just going through a lot of ups and downs in my head. That was just borne out of being a bachelor, a night owl, and coming up with a melody and theme that was a little more about the serious side of what I was going through.



The "Night Fades Away" single, issued by MCA/Backstreet (no relation...)

..."Valentine"? (Frank Russo, Freehold, NJ)

I was deep into mixing the *Code of the Road* live album, with Tim Foster, who was my sound man and produced the record with me. I took a break to go accept a British Music Award for Bruce. It was the night before Valentine's Day, and it was on my mind.

I'm really not a big fan of Valentine's Day, but I knew it held a special sentiment for many people. At some point, in the back seat of the car as I drove in, I was like, "Okay, Valentine's Day, let me see here...." Using "Be my Valentine" to symbolize a deeper "Be my soulmate," I wrote the song on paper and in my head. It turned out to be a good one, and I later got Bruce to sing the harmony on it, and it was actually one of the few songs I did that got a little airplay.

Anyway, so I completed the song, I made a quick demo of it that night. It's funny—I was working in England, and prior to a solo acoustic show at the famous Palladium in London, we dropped off some rough cassette demos of that song to radio and they played it on air. Just a little drum machine and me doing all the parts, and it helped sell out a Palladium show—which was exciting for me, because the Beatles were on that stage.

It wasn't until about three or four years later when I did the *Silver Lining* record, Kevin McCormick produced it, and we cut a good track for "Valentine." At that point I hit on Bruce, I think I sent him a tape of the song—or maybe I didn't. Bruce is cool, he was living in L.A. a lot, and I just asked if he would mind coming down and singing a harmony. He picked a day that worked for him, came down, and really got into it with us and came up with something that we all felt good about.

..."Believe"? (Richard Desiderio, Yorktown Heights, NY)

"Believe" was originally this song on the *Gone Crazy* Grin record. David Briggs—a producer and dear, dear friend, who was like an older brother for me growing up—he had this great baby grand Steinway in his home, and I wrote that musical piece on his piano and came up with a chorus that I really liked. At the time I was a lot younger and more immature, and when I wrote this, it turned into a love song to a girl.

So we did a record of it and it came out good, and then over the years I kind of forgot about the song. Later, it seemed like another lifetime, and I thought, wow, that chorus, "believe in yourself," means a lot more to me than it did back then. It takes on a greater spiritual slant, and I just felt like I didn't want to sing the song as it was. It was like 20 years later at that point, it's kind of a wasted chorus. So I took the same music and I came up with a different verse lyric that meant a lot more to me. It became more of a spiritual message, because I wanted to sing it and the verse was not adequate to say what I wanted to say with the chorus years later. And so I just stole from myself and rewrote it.

SHINE SILENTLY

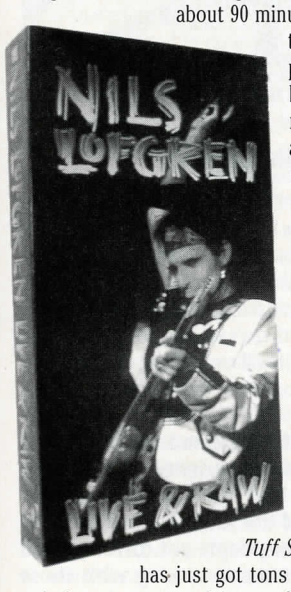
When the reunion tour was over, we took a poll of our readers' favorite moments from the entire tour–your "Youngstown" solo was right up there. And of the top five, it was the only moment that was a nightly occurrence, rather than a one-off thing. There are clearly a lot of fans of your guitar style on that one–where would you point those fans when it comes to your own stuff?

Basically the kind of guitar playing in the "Youngstown" solos is born, really, out of my style which is kind of part blues, a lot classical, and just a little bit of funk. A lot of the fans have complained that there's not enough guitar playing on my records, and that's one of the things I wanted to solve. Certainly on *Breakaway Angel,* acoustically there's a lot of improv and stretching out there. But the *All-Madden Team Band,* that CD really is just like 75 minutes of roaring electric guitar.

That's *Tuff Stuff! The Best of the All Madden Team Band*–that and *Breakaway Angel* are the two new albums you have available on your website. What is *Tuff Stuff,* exactly?

Those are the instrumental pieces I've been making for John Madden's "All-Madden" TV pieces through the years. Not unlike the process of the "Youngstown" solo, I went down in my basement—they'd send me some raw footage of the great football plays that year, some of the plays they were considering—and I just plugged in the TV and the VCR, watched the football footage, put my Strat into an amplifier, cranked it up, and jammed to the footage as I saw it going by. When I would find a riff that I liked, I would get a little drum beat going and then just keep jamming to it until I got an instrumental song laid out. Then I'd take the time to record it and turn it into what wound up being the All-Madden tape—I had so much of it that I asked John if I could put it out as an instrumental record. It's a good chance to really hear the kind of playing that I've done live throughout my career and just stretch it out, roaring on the electric.

My *Live and Raw* video also features a lot of playing much like the "Youngstown" solo, in that vein. It's about 90 minutes of club footage—the footage is pretty primitive sometimes, but we had it mastered really well by Billy Wolf and the sound came out great. It's a good example of that kind of improv guitar playing—eventually if you do it enough, it starts to get a theme to it that you kind of stick to as you go off and experiment throughout. If they enjoyed the "Youngstown" solo, I highly recommend the *Live and Raw* video and the *Tuff Stuff!* CD, which really has just got tons of that style of guitar playing—pretty much in your face all of the time.



And then there's *Breakaway Angel,* a different kind of playing, which sounds just as great.



I'm really proud of the record, I feel great about it. It's my first official studio record in this new world of life without record companies, and I gave myself some freedoms I never had before. I rehearsed the band in advance, enough to get most of the playing and singing done live in the studio—I think 11 of the 14 vocals were live. Most of the guitar playing on the acoustic was live in the studio. I did patch in some licks here and there, but it was a chance to capture a live performance, which is what I'm best at.

I mean, recording records is work, it's a challenge. Playing live in front of an audience is more like therapy. It's where I really feel at home and I really shine. The oppressive thing is going in to sing a lead vocal and having it take three days. And I avoided that. So I was able to kind of trick myself into making this probably the most enjoyable record I've ever made.

This was also a great opportunity to do something kind of very earthy and intimate with the harp, which is something I always wanted to do. Christine Vivona, the harpist—I'd always wanted to work with a harpist as kind of a rhythm guitar—she and I would get together and rehearse our parts separately so that when the rhythm section showed up, we could blow through it pretty quickly.

Once my parts are done, then it was fun, in my basement, to experiment with different touches. I'd take a CD, and I'd go listen to it for days. I would drive around in my car, listening to the mixes in different places, and after three or four days I'd get some idea of what I wanted to change. And then I could change a few things, go away with it, and do the same thing again. This was a chance to really have the music evolve and give me time to really live with it and alter it until I was happy. I felt like I was able to use all the lessons I've learned in recording over 30 years and put it to good use in a pretty positive fashion on this record.

It's my impression that you actually started *Breakaway Angel* before the E Street reunion tour, and then put it on hold and finished it up after, is that right?

That's correct. I did half of *Breakaway Angel* in local D.C. studios and half in Phoenix. I was about three months into it, I'd cut six or seven tracks and just started getting into the swing of it—and then Bruce called. Which was a beautiful surprise. One of the advantages of not having a record company that normally, (and appropriately, I guess), would want to take advantage of the visibility of a tour with Bruce and have you run into every station along the way, is that I had no one breathing over my shoulder. So as a gift to myself, I decided to totally table my solo record and throw myself into the E Street Band.

And I reaped the benefits of that, it was a great joy. No one was hitting on me for interviews or promotions—I had nothing to promote, and I didn't want to have anything to promote. I wanted to promote Bruce and the band and my place in it, and I did. And then as soon as the tour ended, I picked up where I left off and about a year later had this record done.

What other freedoms came from being record company-free?

Breakaway Angel was probably the healthiest recording environment I've been in. Traditionally, you wind up doing those 15-, 16-hour days, and really after about eight or nine hours you kind of get fried. I learned a new kind of discipline which is unnatural to me: I'd get up in the morning, I'd drive to work, I'd work eight or nine hours, and I'd actually force myself to drive home and have dinner with Amy and Dylan and actually try to have a life, you know? It was really a kind of epiphany for me to find a balance between a lot of the important things in my life. Normally the drill is, you have to hurt this thing while you do that thing. And then you've got to ignore your music while you hang with your family. And really, neither one is healthy. This was just a really great opportunity and a successful one to make a record, and spend time with the family, and just feel like I was striking somewhat of a balance that I'd never found before in my life. It was a cool adventure, A to Z, and I'd like to share it with people.

And since you're putting this stuff out yourself, on the internet, you can get *Breakaway Angel* out there at the same time as *Tuff Stuff, Live and Raw,* and whatever else you come up with.

Some people like my gentler voice and like *Breakaway Angel* because it's more soothing. Other people are like, well that's nice, but we can't wait for an electric record. So there *is* an electric record, it's *Tuff Stuff.* Between those two records, certainly, I hope there's finally a lot of guitar playing on my albums. They're available on the web site (www.nilslofgren.com), and through CD Street (www.cdstreet.com), and through the toll-free number (1-877-692-7999).

How has the internet experience been so far? You've talked a little about being on your own, and this is certainly a better time for that than, say, 1983. With Vision music and nilslofgren.com, you to have the ability to put stuff out yourself and not only sell it at shows but sell it online as well. Has that been panning out?

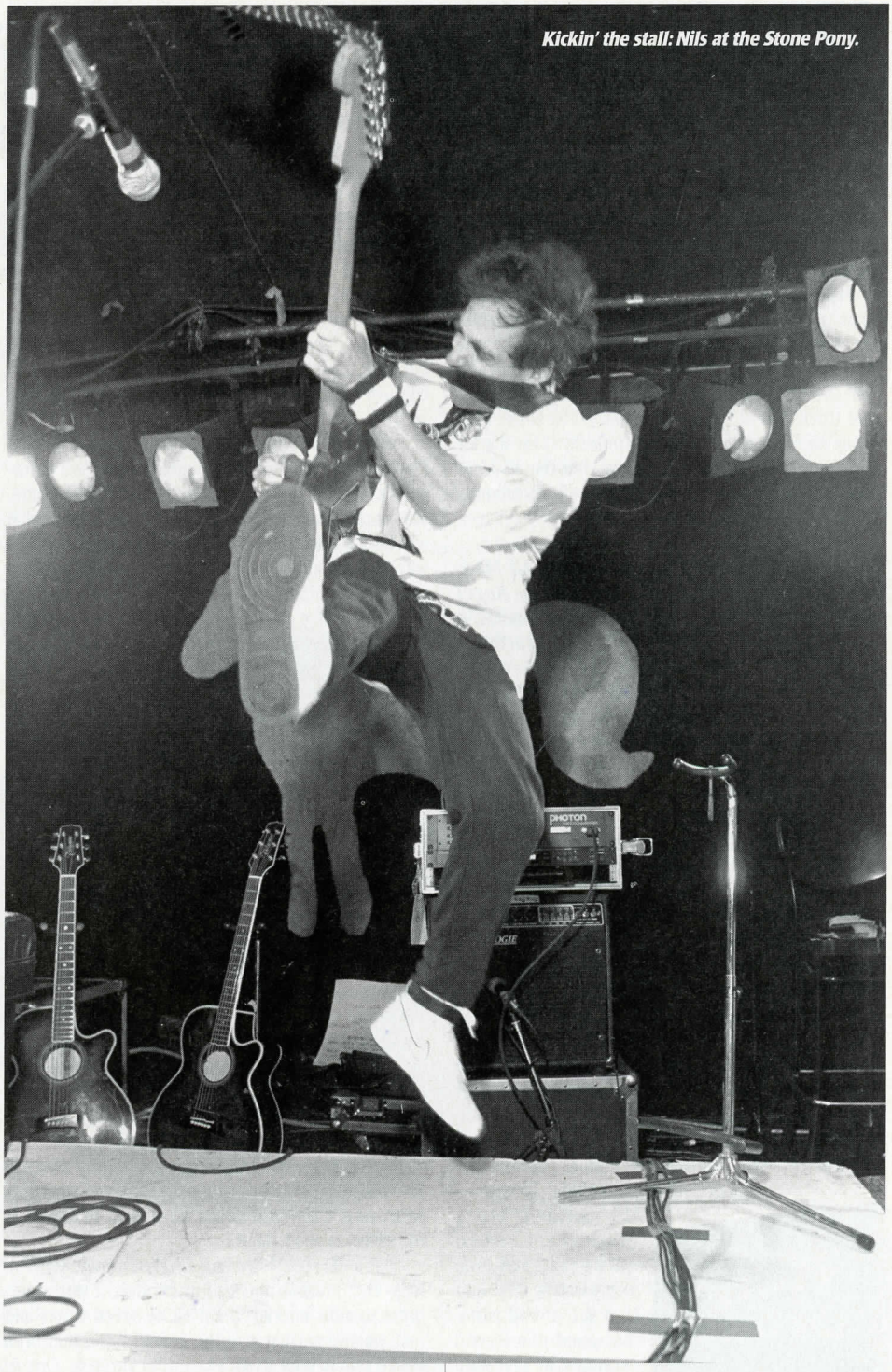
The web site is great. It allows us to put items out there that now I own—I don't need anyone's permission. If you ever went to a record company and said, "I want to do an hour-and-a-half video of bootleg club footage," they'd say, "No, we're not going to pay for that, forget it!" Certainly, as you would expect, it's a little daunting all of a sudden. I mean, I'm not a record company; my dear friend and manager, Anson Smith, he's not a record company. Vision Music is a company that Anson put together for us, just our own little company on paper—we're not looking for new acts, I don't want to produce anybody—this was just a function of legally having a label to print on the record. He's a manager, I'm an artist. So it's new territory for us. When I finally extricated myself from my last long-term deal, which was with Rykodisc, I vowed never to sign a long-term

record deal again as long as I live because I don't have the emotional ability to cope with the worry, the politics, and the B.S. So thus I'm a pirate out here on my own.

Other than starting a new business and being, naturally, a little nervous about that, I'm really excited to be in this new chapter. And I hope that with playing and performing and making records, in a couple of years I can turn the web site and this new venture into something that will last and let me keep going.

And the web site is cool. I send a note in every couple of weeks to update stuff, I'm starting to send chord charts in, and just trying to make it a little more user-friendly for people who are checking it out. The fans keep giving us feedback, which is very exciting. The list serve, this day-to-day chat room on my website, has reminded me that just because I don't have the commercial success doesn't mean that my best efforts don't have an impact on other people's lives. And it helps inspire me to find ways to stay passionate.

My favorite thing of all is to get up and sing and play with this band, because the audience gives me a review instantly. The fans are so great—that's what I love about performing live, you get an instant review. They don't care about politics, they don't care about the business, they care about the music. It's very gratifying and essential to what I do to play and perform, because that's the feedback that keeps me going. And as long as I do my best and I'm prepared, it's always good, it's always favorable. I'm really proud of the shows that I'm doing these days—it's a very aggressive electric show, though we do have acoustic moments in there that feature songs from the new record. At the end of the night, I go to the merchandise stand and sign any CDs, T-shirts, anything anyone wants. It's just kind of a grassroots way of perpetuating what I do, and for me right now it's the healthiest path to take. We post dates on the website, and hopefully people who are near some of the shows that I'm about to play might show up and give me a listen.



Kickin' the stall: Nils at the Stone Pony.

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

NO MERCY

Well, I want to get to questions from some of our readers, and when we gave readers on our website the opportunity to ask you a question, the thing that came up the most often was this: When is he coming to my hometown? When is he coming to my country? There are fans from all parts of the U.S., from Italy to Sweden to Australia to France, all wanting to know that. So let's take care of it in one fell swoop—can you tell me how much you're going to be able to tour for *Breakaway Angel,* and how extensive your touring plans are for the future?

Basically, my goal is to tour on and off for the rest of the year. I want to go everywhere and play, I'm proud of my band. Half the new record, *Breakaway Angel,* is the rhythm section, Timm Biery and Wade Matthews. Our fourth member is Buck Brown, who plays keyboards and guitars. And we've gotten a lot of shows under our belt since late last year—it's a very exciting group. Last November I went to England and did 26 cities in 30 days. But one of the frustrating things about not having more commercial success is you don't have the freedom to go, "Hey, great, let's go to Europe and Italy and Spain and all the other territories." That is a reality for people that aren't on the radio a lot—I mean, I would love to go to Italy, I would love to go all over Europe. I have spent decades traveling all over Europe and other territories, but you can't go there and do an isolated show. It's not for lack of desire on my part to get there, it's just unfortunately a business situation where no one is inviting me at the moment. If radio and the record industry aren't offering any support, and they may not—and that's not the fans' concern, it's just a reality for me—I just have to be careful now, and patient. My goal, my *job,* is to stay passionate about making music and go play it, and I will continue to do that. But we'd love to go to all these different countries and the answer is, right now, no one is inviting us; there's no promoter in Australia who's saying, "Here's a plan, will you come and play here?" That's one of the frustrations, and I hope that changes with some success. My goal is to just try and stay healthy and creative and just keep making music and get better at what I do. And if I focus on that, there's always the hope that the markets I can go play in will expand and open up once again. That's my hope.

Another subject that came up from fans quite a lot was your experience playing with Neil Young. You've had the very rare opportunity to be a part of the careers of a couple of legends, and a lot of people are curious about the differences between working with those guys. Is it possible to compare and contrast

Neil and Bruce?

They're certainly two of the great songwriters in history. Both are very passionate, both have very similar approaches to live performance, having a lot of edges to go out on, improvising a lot of things to keep it exciting for the audience and the band, and both are very passionate and professional about going about it. From my perspective, they're almost identical. Obviously they have different-sounding voices, but to me it's music that falls under the category of "melodic rock." Other than the obvious differences in the sounds, working for them was very similar because it's just people I love, songs I love, and a freedom to really be who I am and integrate it into that.

I guess part of it is wondering, since you yourself are a songwriter and bandleader and have also been in their bands and seen them at work, are there differences in playing in their bands? Do they have different styles as bandleaders, or is one more spontaneous than the other?

Not really—you know, they're both very similar in the sense that they're human beings before they're anything, so there's really not one rigid way of approaching something at all times, especially in music. For instance, what's a good example.... Okay, like the *Tonight's the Night* record. The theme of that record was loose: Neil wanted to show people how things are before it gets over-rehearsed, before it gets too polished. That was the theme he was presenting, and we would hang out and record literally from six in the evening to dawn at SIR with the remote truck pulled up to the rehearsal room; we played, ate, drank, reminisced, partied, commiserated about a couple of close friends that had OD'd recently. It was basically just hanging out with a really close-knit group of musicians, from evening until dawn or later in the morning. Through the night we would record and play new songs as we learned them, and we never got to learn them too well. Neil wanted the rough edges on—he didn't want them to ever be too finalized.

Fast forward decades later— I did the *MTV Unplugged* show with Neil. That was a beautiful record—*Harvest Moon,* I love that record—and I was lucky that when he did the show in New York he didn't like it and wanted to do it again in L.A. and asked me to participate. We only rehearsed for three days, but we rehearsed a batch of about 15 songs and got them a little more tight. We didn't belabor it—some days Neil would even send me in and say, "Nils, you just sing the parts for a while," like he didn't want to OD on his own songs. Like, "I know the songs, you guys need a little work." We didn't overdo it, but it was a little more put together.

Same thing with Bruce, like when we did the [Asbury Park] benefit shows at Christmas. They busted their asses all week, but I showed up at the last minute. So for me, we walk out, we rehearse a couple of my numbers, Bruce comes out and sings and plays, but we don't belabor it. It's loose but it works, it's like, "That's good enough—next!" And it's that kind of show. When you're putting together the *Tunnel of Love* tour, you take your time a little bit more and organize things a little more. Any great artist is capable, depending on what his needs are for the project at hand, of calling on the ability to make things very tight and in place, or very loose and freeform, and everything in between. That's kind of a personal choice depending on each project. In general, any artist tends to be a little more tight in the studio—with the huge exception of like *Tonight's the Night,* which was the antithesis of normal studio recording, and that was the intent.

So other than how people take in a voice or a guitar sound, what you're getting is very passionate, extraordinary songwriting and presentation from them both, and that's why it's a very similar experience. The differences that I can speak of are really only in the sounds that are coming at you, in presenting those melodies and lyrics which ultimately, kind of have the same successful goal of touching people in a huge way.

As far as similarities go, I would also imagine that both Neil Young and Bruce have such vast catalogs that as a player in their band, you've got to be prepared for just about anything.

Well that, I guess, would be one generalization—in general, Bruce, more than most people, likes to change things up in the set. I don't really know anyone who does it to the extent of Bruce. The bands I've been in with Neil or Ringo Starr, we would do that, but not to the same extent. So that would be one thing that Bruce is kind of noted for that is a little bit of a difference. He tends to want to go through a lot more numbers than most band leaders, which is cool, and it keeps the audience on their toes—and the band.

Any chance of a Grin reunion? (Andrew McKerihan, Perth, Australia)

No chance of a Grin reunion, and I'll tell you why. Grin was truly a band effort. Bob Berberich, my brother Tommy (who was with us the last two albums and the last three years, really), and I have agreed that we just don't feel like Grin really is Grin without Bob Gordon. He was our bass player/background singer, but he was a very strong force and personality in the band. We've debated that—there are a lot of great bass players who could do the music justice—but there's something that just has made us feel uneasy about calling a band "Grin" without all four of us there.

Are there plans for you to release a box set of outtakes and other undiscovered gems that go back to the Grin days? We'd love to hear it. (Peter Guglietta, Mt. Prospect, IL)

Not really. Now that I'm on my own I have looked, and will continue to look, at possibilities of releasing outtakes from my basement demo sessions. But up until really '95 or '96, when *Damaged Goods* came out, all my old music is owned by the companies. These companies are not open to any creative discussions

TROUBLE'S BACK

June 7	**Ram's Head**	**Annapolis, MD**
June 8	**Ram's Head**	**Annapolis, MD**
June 9	**Ram's Head**	**Annapolis, MD**
June 10	**Ram's Head**	**Annapolis, MD**
August 30	**Birchmere**	**Alexandria, VA**
August 31	**Birchmere**	**Alexandria, VA**

For additional Nils Lofgren dates as they're announced, visit www.nilslofgren.com and www.backstreets.com/concerts.html.

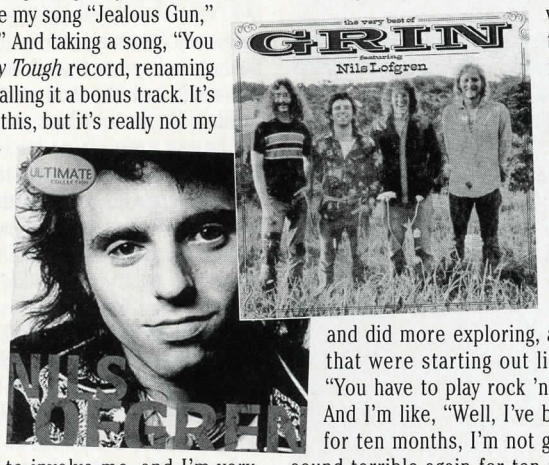


Grin, outstanding in their field, c. 1972. L to R: Tom Lofgren, Nils Lofgren, Bob Berberich, Bob Gordon.

JOEL BERNSTEIN PHOTO

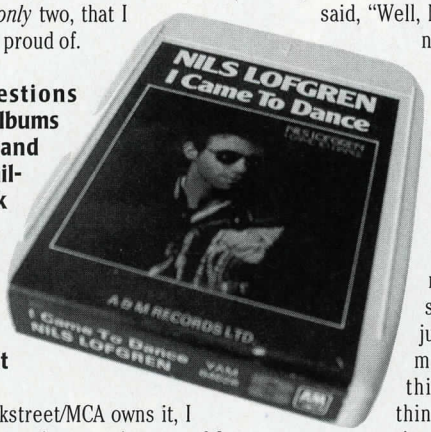
with me. I'm small potatoes with them—they don't want to bother with me. Most of my old records are out of print. I've asked them to put them back in print, and they've refused. It's just standard show-biz stuff: on the books I owe them tons of money, and I'm like, "Gee, why don't we make some of these records available? I know my fans want to buy them," and they say, "We're not interested." And I'm like, "So now the record is out of print, no one can get it, and I can't even sell 100 copies to help you make some money back." It's a tough Catch-22. But my point is, all the outtakes from everything before '95 I don't own, I don't have the right to put them out.

A lot of people have been complaining, and rightfully so, about reissues—poor quality soundwise, and some glaring errors like my song "Jealous Gun," calling it "Jealous Guy." And taking a song, "You Lit a Fire," from the *Cry Tough* record, renaming it something else and calling it a bonus track. It's embarrassing to admit this, but it's really not my fault. The record companies, believe it or not, when they put together repackaging efforts of my music never call me or ask me to be involved. This is maddening—to me, it's unconscionable—but apparently it's not illegal. They own it, and they do not need to involve me, and I'm very, irate, upset, and embarrassed about it, that they put out stuff with those kinds of errors.



For the first time in literally 30 years of reissues, in the last couple of years Hip-O did call me and say, "We obtained the rights to put out a collection, and we're going to do it with or without your participation. Would you like to participate?" The answer was a huge *yes*—I participated every step of the way, and I'm proud of the *Ultimate Collection* compilation that came out on Hip-O. Yes, there are songs that I regret not being on there, but that's all on me. The quality is good, and I got to be involved. Sony Legacy also called a couple of years ago, because they were going to put out *The Very Best of Grin.* Once again, Bob Berberich, my brother and I got involved every step of the way. We found old photographs, we found a couple of unreleased tracks in the basement, and we were involved in every aspect of that. So those are the two reissues, and the *only* two, that I had my hand in and that I'm proud of.

We had a few questions about reissues—when albums like *I Came to Dance* and *Cry Tough* might be available. I wanted to ask you specifically about the fantastic *Wonderland*— who owns the rights, and why it's not on CD—but I think you just answered that one, too.



Unfortunately, I did. Backstreet/MCA owns it, I can't convince them to reissue it or put it out, and I can't buy it from them. They just don't even want to take time to have a dialogue about any of it with me.

You have such a unique guitar style—your use of a thumb pick while the other fingers are used for dampening, etc. How did it start, and how did you develop it to become one of the most identifiable of all electric guitarists? (Peter Steen, Tarzana, CA)

Well, it's just an accident. I'm left-handed, and my brother Tommy started playing guitar when he was a teenager, a few months before me. I was an accordionist from six to 15, I played classical accordion. My dad had an old, beat-up guitar, and there was a thumb pick in it. I was still playing accordion, but I started learning guitar for fun, as Tommy started showing me some chords because I fell in love with rock 'n' roll as a teenager. I put this thumb pick on, and my right side was so spastic that it took about nine or ten months—between using a thumb pick, which is like a board, and using the right side of my body, being left-handed—before I started being able to make something resembling music. As I got more interested and did more exploring, all the local musicians that were starting out like me started saying, "You have to play rock 'n' roll with a flat pick." And I'm like, "Well, I've been sounding terrible for ten months, I'm not going to start over and sound terrible again for ten more because you say I've got to play rock with a flat pick." I just stuck with the thumb pick. I was just a kid. As I grew up I started finger picking, I came to realize, when it was too late to change, that the thumb pick is like a board—no matter how gently you hit the strings, there's a harsher tone than with a thin or a flat pick. That's why I use my fingers and flesh to get the gentler tones.

When Bobby Bandiera couldn't make the final Bruce Holiday show in Asbury Park, you stepped in with a great solo "Here Comes the Sun." It sounded great! Did you already know the tune cold, or did you have to "cram" to learn it for showtime? (Bill Noke, St. James, NY)

I had to cram. I knew the song, but I'd never played it or sang it, and I'd been watching Bobby do this beautiful version. It was a day or two before, when Bobby said he wasn't going to be there, and Bruce said, "Well, Nils, maybe you could do it that night." I went and got the record, I learned it, and Bobby was also kind enough to sit down and show me what he was doing. So I pretty much just emulated what Bobby had already put in place, with my own finger-picking style. I practiced it a lot up in the hallways and the dressing rooms. I'd go watch somebody sing, and then I'd run back up and just play it again. I've got a decent musical mind—I can play something strictly from memory and think a lot, and my hands are still going to make music—but I'm at my best when the mind's not working. So I did a lot of reps, just to myself. I'd be mumbling to myself while I watched Southside Johnny—again, just trying to not worry about looking at the TelePrompTer for words and internalizing it as much as possible.

Then you got to do some great stuff of your own.

Yeah, it was really cool. Bruce had said he wanted me to do "Black Books" and "Shine Silently," and we did, but I guess the second day he said, "You know, those are the songs I picked—if you've got any other ideas, feel free to do what you want." I'd been doing "If I Should Fall Behind" on my own tour, so I thought well, geez, I'd love to do my band version of "Fall Behind" and have Bruce sing a little bit, and we did. That was great, just to throw that together with Max's band, which is a fabulous band, in the afternoon. And of course to have the horn section—Jimmy Vivino would just whip up a horn part, literally in minutes on stage. "Get rid of that, add this…" and the horn part was done. It was such a great run of shows, the spirit in that room those five nights was so amazing. I did the one the year before and I had a ball, but it was a very kind of frenetic energy and my adrenaline was through the roof. This last time I was excited, but I felt a calm I hadn't the year before,

The second-to-last night of the run you also did "The Star Spangled Banner," which was quite a surprise and a nice moment. What's the story behind your version of that?

Well, I almost canceled my U.K. tour in November because of 9/11, and I'm glad I chose not to. In England, the constant theme was "Nobody's coming to play, thank you for not canceling." Unbeknownst to me, big acts, small acts, no one was coming. It was such a strange time to leave my family and go that far away in light of 9/11 and all that it represented. Amy was very supportive and felt like I should go, and I did, and I'm glad I did, but I did the National Anthem with my band every night. I started doing that song all alone for many years at sporting events. Actually, the home team always has won when I've done it. I've done three NBA games and five NHL games. I'm eight-and-0.

So anyway, December 7 was not only Pearl Harbor Day, but also the anniversary of my father's death. He passed away four years ago, and was like my hero. He was a pilot in World War II. And I just thought, you know, I'd really like to sing the anthem tonight. I asked Bruce if I could, and he thought about it and decided it was cool. So, on the fly, I felt like on that particular day for a lot of reasons it was something I wanted to do, and Bruce went with it and it worked out great. It was just a very great week on a lot of levels, to participate in something that loose and powerful and that just had such a good spirit to it.

Were you ever asked to join an existing band (other than Bruce's) or had an interesting offer to form a band with musicians readers might be familiar with? (Bill Conlon, New Britain, CT)

Not really. You know, occasionally you bump into people and mess around with them; I've jammed with a lot of people, but it's just been jamming. As far as anything serious like putting some band together and going out to play, I've pretty much been a solo artist. In general, I'm just really into doing my own stuff. With unusual exceptions, which, if I love the people and the music and I know I can throw myself whole-



DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

Family style: Nils and his brother Tommy.

heartedly into a situation indefinitely, then it makes sense. Luckily for me it happened with Neil Young and Ringo and Bruce, and those have been very special bands to be a part of.

Wasn't there an opportunity you had to audition for the Stones? Is there a story there?

Yeah. When Mick Taylor left, I knew Ronnie Wood would be the guy, because he's Keith's buddy and he's a great player. There was no announcement for weeks, which told me something was up. You know, inherently you realize that they're going to find someone that they know, that they're friends with. But because I'm a huge fan, I just wanted to go on record that I wanted an audition.

It was kind of a quest for me. I tracked down Ronnie Wood, who I knew from the Jeff Beck Group bands, and my band Grin opened up for the Faces quite a bit when he and Rod Stewart were in the Faces. I got Ronnie on the phone, and he was kind enough to be honest and say he was offered the job—and he turned it down. He was going to stay with the Faces. He put me on the phone with Keith Richards, who was at Ronnie's cottage in England, playing with guys on his own. I'd never met Keith, and I was just kind of a number-one fan saying, "Hey, you guys are great, and I love your music, and I just want to go on record as saying since Ronnie won't do it, I'd love an audition."

It was as much of a fan call as anything else, to say hey, if you need somebody, let me give it a shot. Deep down inside I knew Ronnie belonged in there, but Keith was so honest and friendly. He said, "Yeah, I'm playing with guys on my own, and I'm frustrated—we want Ronnie, he won't do it, so we're going to have open auditions in a month's time." As a band, they were just going to have a lot of people come through and play with them briefly and see what they felt as a band. And he said I was welcome to be one of the many. Within days—nothing to do with me—the rumor has it that Rod Stewart kept telling his buddy Ronnie Wood not to make that mistake, and I think Ronnie had a change of heart and took the job he should have all along. But I was always taken by how open and honest both of them were about it.

What was your working relationship with the Pretenders? Something I read or saw a long time ago said that you jammed with them a lot when they first came out; another rumor was that you actually joined the band on a short temporary basis for some shows—is this true? (Dan Fucinaro, Omaha, NE)

Kind of, that was a little deeper. Their first tour in America, I hooked up with them. Unbeknownst to me, Jimmy Scott was a fan of mine and had my records, and we got to be good friends. I played with them in Baltimore; Jimmy asked me to follow them up to Philly and New York, and I did. It was very exciting to come out on stage and play with the Pretenders. Again, I was bouncing between D.C. and L.A., I spent a lot of time in L.A. where Jimmy and I hooked up and hung out a lot. Unfortunately, we both liked to drink too much at the time, but we played a lot together, and we had fun. In Santa Barbara I went up to see them and play with them, and just in general got to be good friends with all of them.

Last fall my wife Amy and I treated ourselves to a Greek Theater show where Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders were opening with Neil Young. I got to go and have a nice visit with Chrissie and Martin Chambers and the other guys in the band, they're great. That was just a very special time on the Pretenders' first tour with that first album, which is a classic—to be able to get to know Jimmy, specifically, and to get to go out and play with certainly one of the greatest bands to come out at that time.

In the late '70s, everyone was starting to go—or at least I was—"Is that it?" I mean, after the '60s, is that it? Is there never going to be anybody good, I mean *really good,* again? And then the Police and the Pretenders answered that with an emphatic *no,* and here we are, thank God.

I grew up in NJ listening to Bruce and the E Street Band, as well as your solo material. I think your guitar playing is second to none. Who are your influences as a guitarist? (John Rhodes, West Simsbury, CT)

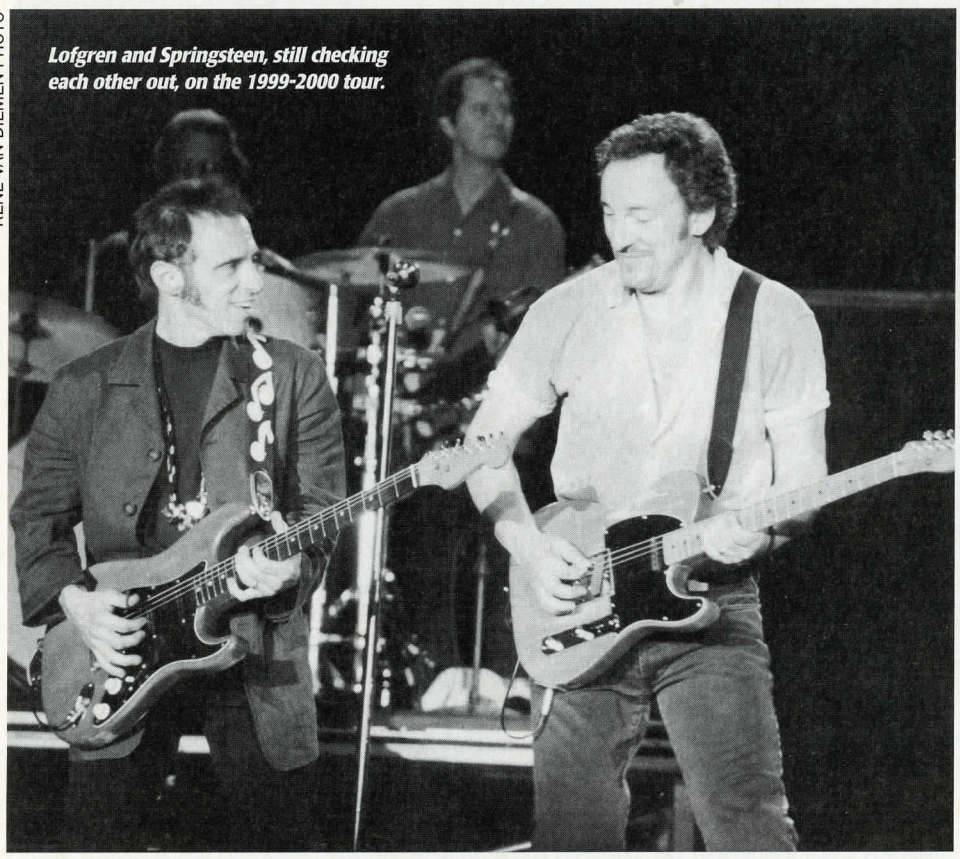
Well, initially, to me, Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck were always head-and-shoulders above everybody. Roy Buchanan was also a huge early influence, and of course there was Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton. For the thematic two- and three-note rhythm stuff it was Pete Townshend and Keith Richards, and that was kind of the soup that I got everything from, initially. Those were the main guys that I grew up emulating.

Through the years, there are so many great guitar players out there—if you name one, there are 100 who follow—but it's really about conveying a feeling. The Edge in U2: he is a virtuoso, a brilliant guitarist and musician, but it's not about fast licks, it's about the effects and the sounds he creates.

I should mention Michael Stern, who is one of the number-one jazz players and an old buddy from D.C. We grew up together here, he used to play with Miles Davis, and he's just a brilliant guitarist with a lot of soul. And Bobby Manriquez, who played in some bands of mine—he's up in Philly now, and he's been out of the music business per se, but he just put a CD together and it's on his web site. Fabulous guitar player, an undiscovered great, but there's just a lot of really good players out there.

Who are some of the current artists you are listening to, and how to do you find out about new music out there? (Fred Norris, Bedminster, NJ)

Right now I'm dying for the next Peter Gabriel



RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

Lofgren and Springsteen, still checking each other out, on the 1999-2000 tour.

record—I actually called his manager and whined about it about three months ago, and they said it probably isn't going to be out until the summer. But any time Sting puts out a record, Peter Gabriel, Ray Charles, Elvis Costello—I just went out and bought the new Elvis Costello record, amazing—U2, Sheryl Crow's really great, Bonnie Raitt, I just grabbed her record… I just know I'll enjoy them and be inspired in some fashion.

I play music a lot in my life, I've got a boombox in almost every room. I don't play it loud, necessarily, but just in the background to keep my mind out of a darker place. I play a lot of old Nat King Cole, Sinatra, Tony Bennett, all kinds of stuff, old Motown, I just love music.

Obviously, I know there are a lot of other people out there I'm missing, some of the newer artists out there. Dave Matthews is not new any more, but of course he does great stuff. One of the records that really struck me recently, about a year ago, is David Gray—that song "Please Forgive Me" is like one of my classic desert island must-haves. *Wrecking Ball,* an album a few years ago by Emmylou Harris.

One of the best records of the '90s.

One of the best records of the '90s by far—just haunting, beautiful, emotional stuff. So there's a lot of great music that keeps coming out. Unfortunately, because I'm not in the loop, I may not hear about it as quickly as people who have to flog it and write about it, but eventually you hear about the good stuff even if it's not playing in the top 30.

You were part of one of the best spin-off albums of all time, by Crazy Horse, Neil Young's Band. E Street has equal potential with three powerful singer-songwriters–you, Steve, and Patti–with whom you harmonize beautifully. The last E Street tour showcased the band's range as never before–there was even an accordion trio in Italy starring you, Danny, and Roy. Has the group ever considered recording on its own? (David Andrews, Mount Rainier, MD)

Well, it has. After '88 when Bruce moved on to experiment with different players, it came up in the sense that there were some promoters in the early '90s that approached the band about doing some gigs as the E Street Band. First of all, it didn't happen. I don't really know the specifics of everyone else's take on it—this is just my perspective, I'm not speaking for anyone else in the band—but I can tell you that my reaction to the idea from the beginning was negative. I felt like it was inappropriate and just didn't feel right on a musical level or a—I guess I'd have to say on a political level, I don't know if that's the right word for it.

I mean, there's just something about Bruce and the E Street Band that's magical. I've gone and played as a guest in Clarence's shows, it's been great. Max came on a tour with me, played his ass off. I've jammed with the guys, I've done gigs at the Pony and Roy has gotten up with me, Bruce or Max has gotten up, it's all great stuff. But to go out and call ourselves the E Street Band and perform? Probably because inevitably I'd be one of the singers, it just always seemed like a bad idea to me. I don't even know if everyone else felt the same way. I could totally see a promoter going, "Hey, I could make some money here." And maybe he could have, but it was certainly nothing that I think ever got any serious consideration from us as a band.



Where did the trampoline go? It hasn't been spotted since the* Born in the U.S.A. *tour! (Donald Herold, Freehold, NJ)

I'll never forget it—65 shows or so into the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour, we were on a plane late at night, and Bruce said we're going to pull "Rosie" out of the show for a while. He asked, "It's not going to bother you, not doing the flip, is it?" Just a good-natured thing. And I say, "Man, hey, no, it probably will be fun not to worry about that thing, because it's dangerous!"

I forget what song we replaced "Rosie" with, but it stayed out of the show for most of the tour, and so I never did the flip again on that tour. And I realized how nice it was not to worry about it. Then I did my *Flip* tour—I went right to England and did my own tour, and I *did* do it, but mostly I would do the flip without the guitar. It's not nearly as good without the guitar. I think I might have done it with the guitar a few times, but after the *Flip* tour I just decided it was so nice not to worry about that stunt. I started getting into being a singer, a player—I guess I just used the lame cop-out of like, geez, I'm old enough and good enough now to just be a musician and a singer, maybe I can just stop worrying about that stunt and focus on the music more. And with great guilt I've left it out of the show since then.

It's probably never going to reappear, but I do fantasize that to help me through a mid-life crisis that I must have to experience soon, maybe I'll pull out the tramp and try to relearn it, get back into that kind of shape. But I think it's probably more of a fantasy than a reality.

Did you get the guitar flip idea from Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks in Canada in the '60s? (Bill Meagher, Needham, MA)

No, I got the idea because I'm an ex-gymnast—in junior high I got deep into gymnastics. As a young performer, 17, 18, 19 years old, my band Grin started opening for J. Geils and other bands with great live shows. In the early days, I was very shy. I stood there on the mic, sang, and I had no real physical movement going on. That changed soon after that, but when I started opening for bands like J. Geils with these great shows, I thought, "What can I do? I can't dance around, I'm too shy… what can I do?" And I came up with the idea that hey, I'm an ex-gymnast, maybe my old coach can help me learn how to do a back flip while I play the guitar.

A back flip uses a lot of your upper body—you throw your arms up violently, and use your shoulders. To hold the guitar removes the entire upper body from the stunt,



so I knew I'd have to learn a new way of doing it, and I needed help. I found an old coach, went down to the YMCA, got into some ceiling belts, and he worked with me on the mini tramp I bought. Once I got the hang of it with the belts, he took off the belts and hand-spotted me, we did that for a while, and then finally I took it on the road and started doing it. It was a huge, huge visual hit, and it stayed in the show from '69 to '85.

That's amazing.

Yeah, it was amazing I didn't kill myself—I fell a lot.

I was wondering how many mishaps you had.

Many, but I never got seriously injured. For me this is a dangerous thing to do. My most memorable mishap, we were up in one of the Northwest cities with Bruce on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. I went to wind up "Rosie" with the drum roll from Max, and I barely made it around—I had to put my hand up to keep from falling on my face. As soon as I landed, I turned around expecting Bruce to crash the band back into the song, relieved that I'd survived yet another flip. Bruce looks at me—he's got Max on hold, he's got his hand up, like "no, no, no"—and he looks at me and goes, "That wasn't good enough, do it again!" I said, "What?! That wasn't good enough?!"

So I went and did it again, and this time I fell worse, I landed on my hands and knees. I turned around, and Bruce was about to give up, and I stopped him—I said, "All right, you started this, I'm going to do this right." And the third time I did it I belly flopped. I really hurt myself—I rolled over on my back with the guitar on top of me, humiliated in front of like 40,000 people, and I looked at Bruce like, *one more time and the neck's broken.* And he knew it. He just looked and laughed at me laying on the floor, humiliated; he went up to the mic and said, "Fuck it," counted the band, slammed back into the show as I slowly, shaking, got back on my feet and got back on the program.

Well, humiliated or not, you certainly get points for your effort.

That's the thing about live: either you love it or you don't. And I'm grateful that I've grown up, as obviously Bruce and the rest of the band has, to be someone who thrives in a live environment, because you can't fake that. If you're in an audience, you can sense if the person up there is enjoying it and wants to be there. That will tell you how good he is. If he doesn't want to be there, and he's not into it, you feel it and it makes you uncomfortable. And I'm grateful that I grew up to be someone who loves performing live, more than ever. It's basically become therapeutic at this point.

At the Garden on the final night of the tour, the crowd started an "E STREET BAND! E STREET BAND!" chant. That was emotionally overwhelming for a fan, I cannot imagine what the band must have felt. I was there, and what really struck me was that many of the band members had looks on their faces of—I don't want to say shock, but, pleasant surprise. Almost as if some of them didn't really know how strongly the fans felt about them, and not just Bruce. My question is, was that evening a revelation? Or were the band members already fully aware how much we cherish each and every one of them? (Tom Pareti, Chicago, IL)

From my perspective it was a surprise, and it was a greatly appreciated one. I have a different perspective than the other fellows—I joined the band 18 years ago in '84, and I've spent most of my life as a bandleader doing my own music. So maybe for some of the other guys it even hit them harder. It certainly gave me goose bumps, and it was exciting to watch, and I'm guessing it might have hit the other guys who have been in the band longer even more, maybe their goose bumps were even bigger.

My whole life, as a bandleader, I've never been able to keep one band together. I haven't had that kind of commercial success and freedom to just keep people around. One of the good things is that, even though it's a pain in the neck to keep finding other players, you learn a lot by putting things together all over with other people. It's an adventure in itself. But also my attitude is, like every time a great musician says "I've got to take off," or "I can't be there for you," there's a part of me as a bandleader that gets a little fired up, a little indignant: hey, no one's going to stop me from going out there and doing my thing. If I've got to find somebody… whatever I have to do, I'm going to do it. If it's finding a different drummer, or a bass player who's not as good, I'm going to find people who can help me do what I do, and I always have.

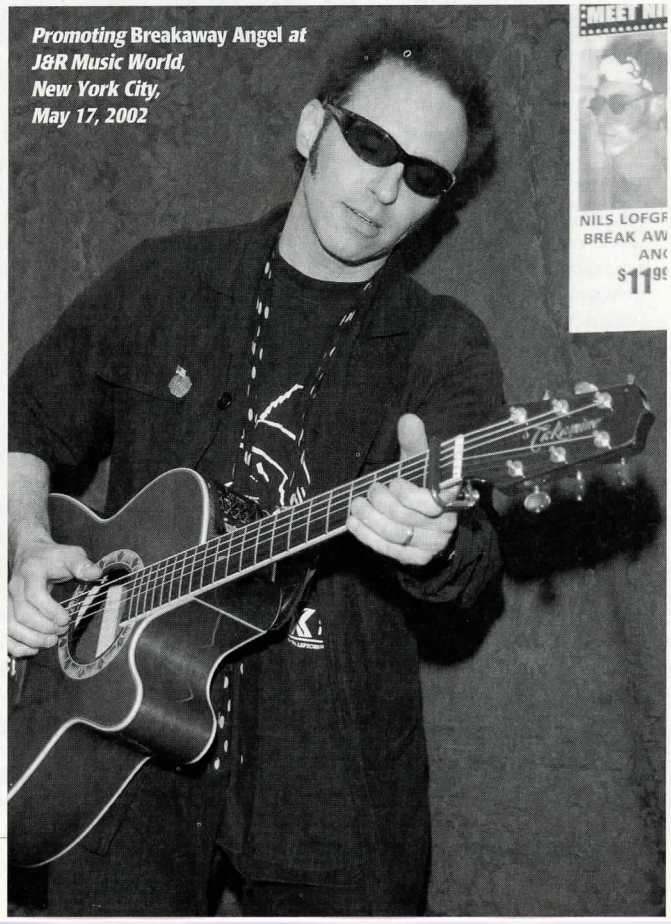
But to be in something that long and that successful is very special to me. And *those* guys—I mean, I was the first new band member in a decade when I joined. Even Bruce has acknowledged that, even a singer of his caliber—I mean, his songs, his voice, his presentation is always going to be great, but there's something special about the E Street Band that he created with them, and with us, that you can only have with that group. No matter where I play guitar, I'm going to hopefully play passionately and well; no matter where Max plays drums, so on and so forth. But when we're all together as a unit, it's that old adage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. I think everyone knows that and believes it. But to have an audience remind you of that in that fashion, totally out of the blue like that, that was a real special, emotional experience for all of us.

For Nils Lofgren's latest tour dates, or to order merchandise, visit www.nilslofgren.com; those without internet access can order from CD Street by calling 1-877-692-7999.

On very short notice, a large number of readers submitted questions for Nils via the *Backstreets* website. Many of the subjects came up naturally in the course of the interview, but Nils was also kind enough to answer many specific ones—even more than we have room to print here.

Visit www.backstreets.com for more, as well as additional "outtakes" from the interview.

Additional thanks to: David Andrews, Jonathan Angress, David Ashby, Chris Barlow, Rick Barreau, Andrew Baxley, Jim Bell, David Billotti, Jason Bisogni, Carlos Blanco, Michael Bournazian, David Brock, Steve Buckingham, John Burdick, Chip Burton, Seth Bushnell, Tom Ceraulo, David Christian, Mario A. Cirillo, Claes-Henrik Claesson, Bo Clausen, Kevin Compton, Bill Conlon, Eric Coulson, Ron Culbertson, John DeBeradinis, Yancy Deering, Tim Devin, Denise Dillon, Terry Dubow, Danny Eitner, Scott Fader, Amy Maline Focareta, Mark Fromm, Rich Garcher, Linda Gilder, Anders Gjestvang, Jay Green, Mary Grimaldi, Pete Guzik, Paul Haider, Colin Hall, Suzette Harmon, Chris Hoover, Mark Hornok, David Iannuzzi, Mike Jedziniak, Josh Kirschbaum, John Kohut, Ken Jarolem, Brad Kaplus, James Krieger, Jeff Kurfess, Little Dougie Lane, Brien Lewis, Bruce Loeb, Sean Loughlin, Kevin McIntyre, Paul Magera, Mike Maloney, Joe Mandak, Robert Mikielski, Thomas Moro, Brendan Mulgrew, Andrew Nelson, Bill Noke, Deirdre Oertel, Kurt O'Neill, Jon Pavone, Kristina Pfützner, Rich Pirone, Evangelos Politis, Mitch Powitz, Michael Rathke, Greg Reiser, Bobby Remhead, Mark Riendeau, Erik van Roovert, Dan Roth, Chad Silver, Jay Staab, Emiliano Stella, Jay Stern, Oddgeir Synnes, Will Taylor, Mark Uzzo, Billy Vanson, Lele Vigano, Robert Watson, Don Weisman, Shayne Wicks, and everyone else who contributed a question for Nils.

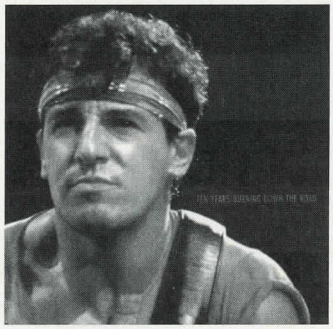


Promoting* Breakaway Angel *at J&R Music World, New York City, May 17, 2002

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

ON COLLECTING

By Fred Mills



Ten Years Burning Down the Road
(Rattlesnake 2CD)
VENUE: CNE Grandstand
CITY: Toronto, Ontario
DATE: July 26, 1984
SOUND QUALITY: 9
PERFORMANCE: 7
PACKAGING: 9

In collectors' circles it's considered a big no-no to knowingly dispense incorrect concert information, and while we'd like to give Rattlesnake the benefit of the doubt, the proximity of this release to Back Streets' *Part of the Show* and Pincher's *Hot Fun in the Summertime* (see *Backstreets* #73) does raise a suspicious eyebrow. Despite the sleeve listing the performance date as 7/24/84, *Ten Years* is in fact the same 7/26/84 pro-video line recording tapped by those other two labels.

That aside, however, as noted previously it's a near flawless (partial show) recording and well worth the purchase. And Rattlesnake performs its customary packaging wizardry too: nicely designed full-color artwork, including a booklet that folds out into a 9" x 15" flags-and-headband souvenir poster. The packaging would have rated a "10" if not for the source date error.

Eight super bonus tracks from the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour round out disc two (billed by the label, somewhat disingenuously, as "never before released on silver disc," they are sourced from pro recordings and appear to have been lifted directly from the Orange label's 4-CDR release *Live/1975-88*). Included: the "Glory Days" (Brendan Byrne Arena, 8/19/84) left off the official live box, the legendary "Two Hearts"/"Ramrod" (Giants Stadium, 8/22/85) Little Steven-Bruce double punch, and "Stand on It"/"Janey, Don't You Lose Heart" (LA Coliseum, 9/27/85).

Jingle Bell Rock
(Ultimate Sound 2CD)
VENUE: Convention Hall
CITY: Asbury Park, NJ
DATE: December 3, 2001
SOUND QUALITY: 7
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 8

Documenting the first evening of the five-night holiday stand, this comes highly recommended by virtue of Bruce & Friends' two opening songs: the recently-deceased George Harrison's "Something" (with Soozie Tyrell on violin) and "My Sweet Lord." Later in the show, as at four of the five nights, Bobby Bandiera steps up for a heartfelt "Here Comes the Sun." Other notable solo spots include Southside's "I Don't Want to Go Home,"



brother Nils' "Shine Silently," Patti's new tune "Love (Stand Up)" and Garland Jeffrey's newly poignant "New York Skyline." Also, as noted in last issue's extensive coverage of the Christmas gigs, there's a one-off version of the quirky R&B nugget "Santa Claus, Santa Claus" (incorrectly listed on the sleeve as "Santa Bring My Baby Back to Me") and what amounts to 30-year anniversary readings of "Thundercrack" and "Seaside Bar Song." All that, "My City of Ruins" and ol' gal "Rosie," too—sweet.

Ultimate Sound put some effort into its artwork as well, decorating the booklet and tray card with color photos and ticket stubs from the show. Not quite as elaborate as Crystal Cat's *Jingle Bell Night* production, but nice just the same. Soundwise, it's a reasonable audience recording—slightly midrangey, but with very little crowd interference and fairly clear vocals.



Jingle Bell Night
(Crystal Cat 3CD)
VENUE: Convention Hall
CITY: Asbury Park, NJ
DATE: December 7, 2001
SOUND QUALITY: 8
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9

After a small lull in its Boss production line (busy with Dylan boots, no doubt), Crystal Cat returns in style with the fourth night of the Christmas shows. Among the highlights: Bruce Hornsby, stepping into the slot Garland Jeffreys occupied on nights one, two, and three; that drop-dead surprise cover of Hot Chocolate's "You Sexy Thing"; Nils' "Star Spangled Banner" reading; and of course the unexpected "Incident on 57th Street." You can practically hear the massed sound of dentures and fillings dropping on the Convention Hall floor.

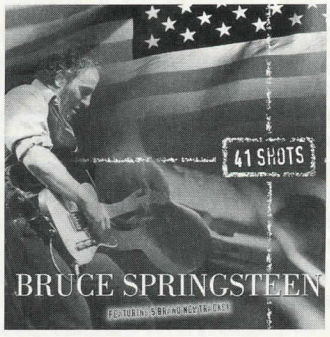
Per C.C. protocol, a whole heapin' helpin' of bonus tracks culled from other nights fills up disc three. From 12/3 you get the two George Harrison songs, "Santa Claus, Santa Claus," and Southside's "Love on the Wrong Side of Town." From 12/4: "Wild Billy's Circus Story," Southside's "Talk to Me," and Nils' "Black Books"/"Shine Silently." And from 12/8: Elvis Costello's surprise appearance for "Alison" (with "Tracks of My Tears" and "Tears of a Clown"), "The E Street Shuffle," and Bruce's end-of-show thank-yous.

Sound quality throughout the main set and for the bonus tracks is fine, with some of the venue-specific characteristics (by now most of us have come to accept that the Convention Hall is not the most optimum site for taping) apparently having been smoothed out somewhat during the mixing and mastering procedures.

The "Asbury Park Holiday Week Wrap-Up" in the booklet was lifted directly from the Backstreets.com website and uncredited; otherwise the packaging is outstanding, from full-color venue and gig photos to detailed listings of all the performers and guests and a reprinted review from the local newspaper. Somebody at the label even added a shiny festive sticker (on my copy, a smiling teddy bear) to the rear of the eight-page booklet.

41 Shots
(Ultimate Sound CD)
VENUE: various
CITY: various
DATE: various
SOUND QUALITY: 8-9
PERFORMANCE: 8-9
PACKAGING: 5

Didn't everyone get sick of seeing the stars & stripes on Bruce boots a long time ago? The actual photos are very nice, but they appear to have been cribbed from various other recent bootlegs, giving the already scattshot *41 Shots* the same kind of generic appearance that marked a lot of the off-brand label productions of the early '90s. Musically, too, since the songs appear to have been lifted from recent boots, there are no surprises, making this 66-minute disc unessential unless you're looking for all of Bruce's newest



tunes in one place. Sound on the audience material is for the most part very good: "Another Thin Line" (NYC 6/29); "Code of Silence," "American Skin," "Further on up the Road" (NYC 7/1); "My City of Ruins" (Asbury Park 12/12). Five tracks from the Springsteen/Grushecky portion of the 11/3/00 Stone Pony soundboard are also included.

Seaside Bar Songs
(Pieces Of 8 CDR)
VENUE: Convention Hall
CITY: Asbury Park, NJ
DATE: December 7, 2001
SOUND QUALITY: 8
PERFORMANCE: 10

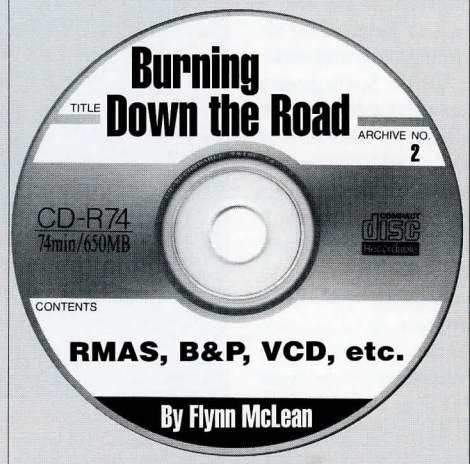
Computers are hummin', and blanks are flyin' off the shelves, so let's get right to it.... First off, let's start with where you can find sources for some of these wonderful fan-produced CDR titles. Before the internet, traders would place ads or respond to ads in the classified section of this magazine. While that still goes on, traders can now post messages on several message boards on the internet, the biggest being the newsgroup rec.music.artists.springsteen (RMAS), a usenet forum. Experienced traders often post requesting a certain title, offering to either send their list of discs via e-mail or giving a URL where their list can be found; "newbies," those new to trading, can ask experienced traders to help them out on a blanks-and-postage (B&P) basis. Additionally, many traders post B&P offers for discs, often saying newbies welcomed, even preferred, to help spread the music and make sure everyone gets a chance. (For a great primer on B&P trading, check out www.mcnichol.com/bnp/.) If you don't have a newsreader, you can access RMAS via the web at http://groups.google.com/groups?q=rec.music.artists.springsteen.

Other Bruce Springsteen message boards on the web include The Circuit, set up by the folks who run the Greasy Lake website (http://www.greasylake.org/), and Live Daily (http://talk.livedaily.citysearch.com). Special recognition goes to the Stone Pony London message board (http://www.lacava.org/), which used to be the discussion area for an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server that housed full-length shows and bootleg titles in MP3 and SHN format. Unfortunately, their host went belly-up, but the message board lives on with discussion of recordings, bootlegs, and other trading issues.

A couple of web sites administer trees on a regular basis. Brucetree.org launched in April, and their first tree is the recently surfaced soundboard recording of the second set and encores of the July 26, 1984, show from Toronto, Canada. Another one is www.joosse.org, which has run international trees of shows distributed by the Bruce Tree Service, one of several RMAS "labels."

The members of the RMAS community did an outstanding job of distributing recordings of Bruce's 2001 holiday shows. Once the best recordings for each night were found (not a quick process, as there were several recordings for most nights), an "honor" tree was seeded. In an honor tree, the recipients agree to offer the recording to five or more people once they receive the discs. Without the top-level administrative work, honor trees are relatively quick to get started, and even if everyone is not guaranteed a copy immediately, people should be able to find copies easily as so many people have the material in a short amount of time.

The sound quality of the holiday show recordings was for the most part top-notch. The recording of the last show, December 8, would make Crystal Cat jealous, as would the recording of December 6. The first night's recording was also quite good,



despite the (expected) exuberance of people standing near the taper. Two different recordings of the second show, December 4, also circulated, and at least three different recordings of the December 7 show made the rounds, all long before Crystal Cat released their *Jingle Bell Night*.

Many people probably consider the 1999-2000 reunion tour "over" in terms of recordings, especially after the *Live in New York City* CD and DVD releases, but some fans remain very interested in those concerts. Numerous shows on the last tour were recorded via "proximity broadcasts," low-level audio feeds that power an arena's Assisted Listening Device (ALD) system or other monitoring systems. While these recordings allow listeners to hear things they wouldn't normally hear, many fans didn't like the inherent sterility and flatness. Additionally, the mix of a proximity broadcast wasn't always even, with some instruments extremely prominent and others barely audible. However, a few determined fans found a way to merge such a tape with an audience recording, to create a mix that often sounded very much like a soundboard. The first two to be done this way were the second night in Cleveland, November 15, 1999, and the show in Charlotte, NC, from April 21, 2000; both received a warm response from the trading community. Since then, both Atlanta shows, Hartford (night one), Denver (night two), the Las Vegas show, and the last night in Los Angeles (which used the Crystal Cat release *L.A. Night* as the audience recording) have all circulated in this mixed format.

One of the more interesting tapes to surface recently is a soundboard from the "Hungry Heart" video shoot, July 9, 1995 at the Cafe Eckstein in Berlin, Germany. The audio is from the video feed, and a Video Compact Disc (VCD) of the footage is also circulating. This unusual performance—and "unusual" is an understatement—includes "Boom Boom," "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," and "Honky Tonk Women," among others. Another soundboard taken from the video linefeed is the second half of the July 26, 1984, Toronto show mentioned above. The video is definitely fun to watch, and the audio is worth a listen as well.

The emergence of the VCD is the latest rage in CDR technology, as a medium which finally allows video to be traded in a loss-less format. Burned onto regular CDRs, VCDs contain full-motion video along with stereo sound. VCDs can be played on any computer that has a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive, usually using Windows Media Player (PC) or MacVCD (Mac), although other software may be needed. Additionally, some DVD players can play VCDs as well. For more information on VCDs and a list of DVD players that can play VCDs, check out http://www.vcdhelp.com.

Most of the commonly circulating videos, such as Largo '78 and '80, are making the rounds on VCD, and more are on the way as people convert their VHS tapes to VCDs. Recent shows, such as the Alliance of Neighbors broadcast, have also been converted to VCD and circulated among traders. Two hours of 1988 performances from Copenhagen and Basel can be found on VCD, and since that footage is sourced from the linefeed, it looks and sounds great—definitely a good sign of things to come in the video world. It's only a matter of time before more people get DVD-R writers and those are traded just as CDRs are traded now.

CDRs certainly killed the analog star, so will DVD-Rs kill the VCD and video tape stars? Time will tell, but things are looking good so far.

PACKAGING: 8

Pieces of 8, a subsidiary of Doberman, has compiled the Bruce-specific tracks—that is, seven Springsteen compositions with the Boss on lead vocals—from the 12/7 holiday show plus one each from 12/4 ("Wild Billy's Circus Story") and 12/8 ("The E Street Shuffle"). *Seaside Bar Songs*' appearance not long after Crystal Cat's *Jingle Bell Night* would suggest the label simply copied the material from C.C., so this single-disc selection will be of interest to you only if (a) you don't have the CC set, (b) you have the CC set but would like to listen to the music sans all those pesky guest vocalists (for shame!) and don't have access to a CD burner with which to make your own compilation, or (c) you're an absolutely insane completist and have to own every bootleg artifact regardless of whether it duplicates something else in your collection. Well, as a collector myself, I guess I can sometimes understand that irrational yet wholly explainable urge....

Backstreets *does not endorse the illegal sale of bootleg recordings, nor can we advise as to their legality or how they may be obtained.*

ON LIPS

THE PRE-SHOW: There's not long to wait now, but if you've just got to have a "new Bruce" fix before the new record hits, Springsteen does turn up on a couple of June releases. *Kindred Spirit: A Tribute to the Songs of Johnny Cash*, originally planned for May, is now slated for June 11. Bruce contributes "Give My Love to Rose.". . . Many Springsteen fans have already been turned on to Marah, especially after their second record, *Kids in Philly* (or after the band shared the stage with Bruce at the 2000 holiday shows in Asbury, or after their "Streets of Philadelphia" B-side...). Now Bruce appears on their latest LP, *Float Away With the Friday Night Gods*, due July 16 on Artemis Records. Bruce contributed guitar and backup vocals to the album's lead track, "Float Away"—but you'll have to listen closely. Marah's Dave Bielanko told *Rolling Stone*, "...the casual listener might not even to catch onto it. We wanted Bruce to play a guitar solo, and he did on that song. I've always been a huge fan of him as a guitar player. He's a very expressive, high-end-y, dramatic guitar player and that's what we wanted—and ultimately he wound up singing on it a bit as well." For more on Marah, see *Backstreets* #66, and visit www.marah-usa.com.

BORN TO... UGH: In mid-May, an unsuspecting public was battered by a barrage of "Born to Run" puns, when news broke of a "Springsteen for Senate" campaign. "Independence for New Jersey" announced their intention to draft the Boss to run for U.S. Senator from New Jersey in the November election, and they began collecting signatures to put his name on the ballot. Not that Bruce is actually interested—his official response was an echo of William Tecumseh Sherman: "If nominated, I will not run. If elected, I will not serve." But the petition drive continued at drafttheboss2002.com, with the necessary 800 signatures gathered, but still requiring Bruce's approval. We'd bet the gentleman from NJ has his own kind of campaigning in mind this year. . . . Of course, Bruce has already been generous in lending a hand to his home state. As reported last issue, he performed at benefit concerts in 2001 for the Alliance of Neighbors of Monmouth County (which helps New Jersey victims of the 9/11 attacks). Now, as an A.P. story reports, Springsteen has donated to the Alliance to help create an educational foundation and wellness center. While Springsteen requested that the amount of his donation be kept private, one of the Alliance's founders, Corinda Carford, said, "He's always been very generous with his time, and I am personally overwhelmed with how much he has given to this organization.". . . Calling him "the common man as rock and roll crusader," *Life* Magazine put Springsteen at #15 on their list of "The Top 100 Rock & Rollers of All Time." Sounds pretty good—but he doesn't outrank Michael Jackson or Madonna? Our definitions of rock and/or roll must differ. Okay, Michael Jackson for U.S. Senate!



RADIO RADIO: Following Little Steven's taking of the airwaves, an old friend has returned to the air: Philadelphia DJ Ed Sciaky. After a few years' absence from the airwaves, Ed's welcome return came on May 5, with the debut of his new program, "Sunday with Springsteen," from 9-10 p.m. on 102.9 WMGK. According to a press release, the show "will not only feature the classic songs from Springsteen's many releases but also rare tracks such as B-sides, imports, live recordings, songs not released domestically, alternate versions of songs, as well as interviews and the latest news from the Springsteen camp." WMGK will follow Ed's show with "Little Steven's Underground Garage.". . . And from Van Zandt to Van Der Beek: the May 17 episode of *Dawson's Creek* featured about 20 seconds-worth of "Leap of Faith.". . . Meanwhile, across the pond, a character in the BBC drama *2000 Acres of Sky* played an acoustic version of "With Every Wish.". . . Kenny Chesney tackles "One Step Up" on his latest, *No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems*, on BNA Records. . . .



Alejandro Escovedo—the present of rock 'n' roll—and Backstreets.

Pete Yorn has already made this column for his numerous in-concert Springsteen covers. If you haven't caught him live, you can check out a couple of his Bruce interpretations with the reissue of his *musicforthemorningafter* album. A bonus CD includes two Springsteen compositions, "Dancing in the Dark" and—get this—"New York City Serenade." The singer-songwriter also co-headlined the May 25 Asbury Music Festival. . . . Cher's new album is called *Living Proof*—and while that title may just be a coincidence, she told the *Today* show's Matt Lauer, "If I want to listen to good music, I'll put on Bruce Springsteen." When Lauer asked if she'd trade her voice for his, she replied: "Oh, absolutely... I want that voice." As long as they can *share* it—no trades allowed.

THE DRUM BEAT: The Mighty One went from the drum kit to the lectern, offering a lengthy "Evening with Max Weinberg" at the Learning Annex in New York. Max's talk covered his whole career, from E Street to *Late Night*, with a multimedia show of footage from both. Of particular interest to Bruce fans: he recalled riding in the car with Springsteen a few years back, as Bruce played him an album's worth of rock tracks that have never seen the light of day; he talked fondly about the "electric *Nebraska*" sessions; and he suggested that the Asbury Park holiday shows are probably going to be an annual occurrence. At a similar event June 2 in Toronto, he called *The Rising* "unbelievable.". . . Joe Grushecky's new CD, *Fingerprints*, was released on May 7, with the single "You and Tonight" getting a lot of airplay in Pittsburgh. *Fingerprints* has 14 new songs from Joe, on Schoolhouse Records. . . . Joe D'Urso & Stone Caravan fans, be sure to check out a new fanzine available online, called *Let the Story Be Told.* The e-zine is available for download as a free pdf file from www.tellmewhy.org.uk. . . .And while you're online, check out sixstringarts.com for highly detailed miniature guitars. One reader tells *Backstreets*: "My wife bought me a 13" Springsteen replica guitar for my birthday, and it's pretty damn cool! It's not cheap, but the detail is astonishing.... there are subtle details (wood grain pattern, chips in the wood, duct tape on the plug-in, finger sweat stains on the fretboard) that any true Springsteen fan would recognize instantly as that well-worn Esquire." The perfect thing if you're livin' in a dollhouse.

CLASSIFIEDS

PERSONALS

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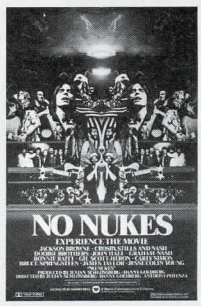
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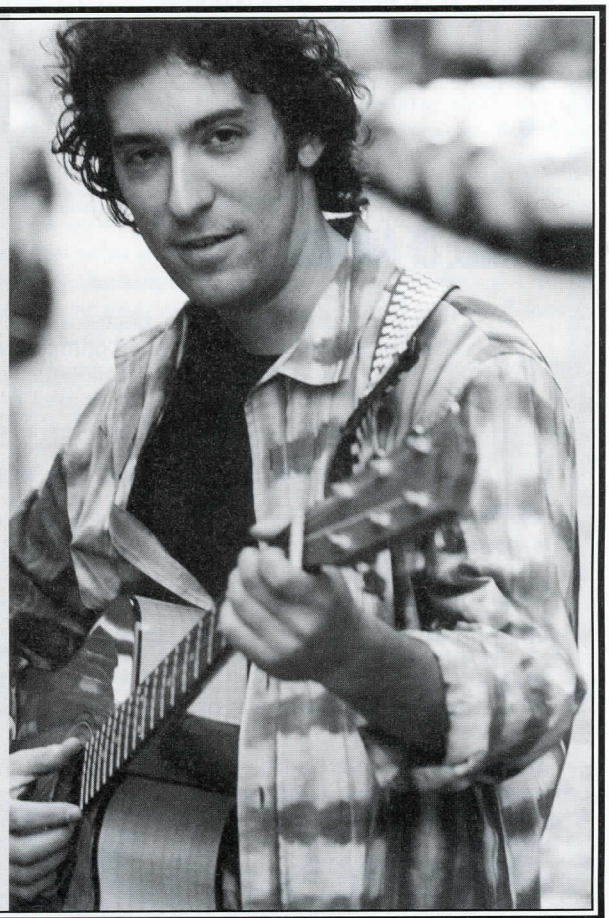
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val is to reflect all the musical currents that have coursed through the veins of this city."

Jersey Shore: The New Liverpool?

Along similar lines, the plethora of historic Jersey Shore musical sites has folks convinced that a heritage trail program should be established to promote them. In April, an inaugural meeting was held in Asbury Park to discuss ways in which the Shore communities could foster a musical tourism industry. Organizer Maggie Powell said, "Despite its worldwide reputation for shaping the music culture of the 20th Century, eastern New Jersey has no strategy for using this asset as an economic magnet. As a result, music fans who travel here in search of music landmarks often leave disappointed because of the lack of recognition these places received."

In addition to Springsteen-related landmarks—like the newly christened Vinyard Park, the Stone Pony, and the Palace Amusements building he sang of in "Born to Run"—there's also the Fast Lane nightclub, where Jon Bon Jovi cut his teeth, and up the road in Red Bank is the Count Basie Theater, named for the jazz great who was born nearby.

Among several speakers at the tourism meeting was Simon Osborne, who manages four Beatles-related historic sites for The National Trust in Liverpool, England. Perhaps Asbury Park and Monmouth County could follow the lead of Liverpool: according to Osborne, now that the welcome mat has been put out to music fans, more than 600,000 of them flock to the riverside city annually to pay homage to the roots of John, Paul, George and Ringo. Tourism there is an $830 million-a-year industry.

"Jersey Jams" Keeps Jamming

Jersey Jams Fund, a fiduciary fund of Bergen County's United Way that aims to fight terrorism with the healing power of music, has raised $15,000 for the New Jersey families of September 11. About $5,000 of it will start a music scholarship fund for their children. The money has been raised with the sale of the 15-song charity tribute CD, *Jersey Jams, Jersey Cares*, featuring such popular Jersey Shore acts as Glen Burtnik and John Eddie; a $5,000 donation from Comcast; and an on-going benefit concert series. More than 30 Jersey Jams Fund events are expected to be scheduled throughout the summer. Several contributors will participate in the Black Potatoe Festival in Clinton, July 12 to 14. Shows are expected at the Pony, Crossroads and Great Adventure. For details, visit www.jerseyjamsfund.org.

Deliver Me From Nowhere

Shout It Out Loud

About the time that Bruce Springsteen realized that leaving a dead-end town was only a means, and not an end, for living—that is, after his first three albums—he hit on a broad theme that's occupied him since: communication. In fact, Springsteen writes about communication probably as often as he digs at community, which is natural, since the two are intertwined. There's the father-son tension in "Independence Day," communicating between intimate partners in "Brilliant Disguise" and "Streets of Philadelphia." You can even say he hits on the broader national conversation about responsibility in "The Ghost of Tom Joad."

But Springsteen's characters, like most of us, sometimes have trouble speaking directly, at least when it comes to relationships. (*Nebraska*, which isn't concerned with romantic love, is chock full of blunt speech.) And you can guess what's hardest to say: "I love you." A quick search through Springsteen's lyrics reveals only five public songs where the phrase is included. Only one received proper album release ("All That Heaven Will Allow"). One of the others was a B-side ("Pink Cadillac"), and three ("Where the Bands Are," "Loose Ends," and "I Wanna Be With You") didn't turn up until *Tracks* was pieced together, which may shows you how comfortable Springsteen was with putting the lines in song at the time he was originally writing these pieces.

But just because folks ain't sayin' it doesn't mean they ain't feeling it. In fact, *Tracks* also has some fascinating incidents of love expressed unusually. Take "Don't Look Back." Angel doesn't need to tell the singer she loves him—she claims her man in writing, where it counts: in his car.

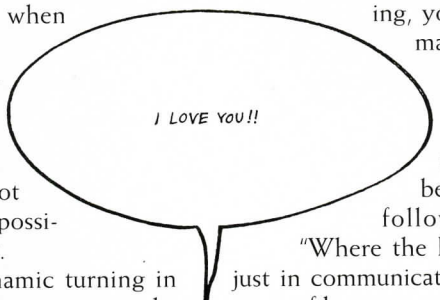
Vehicles, of course, have long been metaphors for manhood and identity in pop culture and in Springsteen's work especially. The old parked car holds the secret to life's mysteries in "Growin' Up." In a broken-down town, cars are life's style and energy: witness the "chrome-wheeled, fuel-injected" identification in "Born to Run." And the '69 Chevy with the 396 is where the guy who's "Racing in the Street" finds his essence when everything else has been burned out.

So when Angel wants to brand her man, what does she do? She straddles the shifter in his front seat. And if anyone didn't know he was her man, she makes it clear as day: "Angel writes her name in lipstick on my dash." She's not goofing off, she's coming as close as physically possible to signing her name across the singer's heart.

There's a similar, but more traditional, dynamic turning in "Linda Let Me Be the One." Instead of the woman possessing her man, the young gun comes to steal a daughter from her father. Eddie isn't the kinda guy who asks for a girl's hand. He's not getting down on one knee, and he's not going to talk to Linda's dad about getting married. No, rather than saying "I love you," Eddie, too, goes the automotive route: "He trashes her old man's car, slashes Linda's name in the seat." With the flick of a knife, Eddie's laying waste to her father's power, and laying claim to her as his love. (The vagaries of slang being what they are, Linda's "old man" could alternately be her boyfriend or husband instead of her father, but the symbolism remains the same.)

But even when a character musters the courage to say those three fearsome words, he can't just do it flat-out over dinner or at the movies. Like "Cadillac Ranch" and "TV Movie" (two songs we'll save for another column), "Where the Bands Are" is a party song that in a single line reveals a heart with something much more subtle at work. On the surface it's a music fan's salute to the rush and temporary escape of rocking out to a live band in a tiny bar. "Yeah tonight I wanna break my chains / Somebody break my heart, somebody shake my brains!" Springsteen shouts in a meaty voice. Behind him, the band bops at a spry pace, with the drums up higher in the mix than anything but the vocals. As with the singer in "Out in the Street," the guy singing this song wants to hit the bars as a diversion from the numbing work and gray houses that consume his and his girl's waking hours. But there's an ulterior motive as well, and that's where the passionate crux lies. "When I tell you that I love you / I wanna have to shout it out loud!" he yells at end of the second verse. Springsteen and the E Streeters echo the call to "Shout it out loud!" two times, as if encouraging the singer to say what it is that he's got to say. The arrangement underscores the empowering nature of seeing a live rock band—the music gives him courage.

But it also gives him a shield. The live bar setting gives him a chance to yell that he loves the woman, but little else. Who knows if she'll even hear him? And with all the guitars ringing, you can bet there won't be any discussion of marriage or kids or moving in together.



It's the kind of detail that breathes recognizable life into Springsteen's work. Okay, maybe Eddie and Angel operate with a little more style than most of us. But who hasn't been afraid of the potential rejection that can follow a baring of your soul like the guy in "Where the Bands Are?" Springsteen's masterstroke isn't just in communicating ideas himself, but in understanding the nature of how you and I communicate with each other.

By Chris Nelson


MEET NILS LOFGREN
ROCK 'N'
ROLL LEGEND
NILS LOFGREN